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“HAPPENS ALL THE TIME”

Late one afternoon in Westerham, as long shadows and blustery showers signaled the day’s end, I and a few others enjoyed a sparse, crowd-free Chartwell. To me, Churchill’s spacious study pal-pably retains his presence, as if he had just stepped out for a minute. As I stood mesmerized, I began to hear suppressed, muffled sobbing and garbled, broken English from a corner of the large room.

A wizened, elderly Frenchman, war medals haphazardly adorning his coat, was holding a young docent’s hands and desperately pleading with her as tears streamed down his cheeks:

“You must know. He saved us. He alone. You have to know that he was the only one. Without him...”

The old man’s words trailed off as he shuffled from the dark room. Moved to tears, I remarked to the docent how special I thought the moment. Her reply was both telling and surprising: “Oh, it happens all the time. All the time.”

Thank you for all you do for The Churchill Centre. I love the magazine.
CAPT. RICHARD SPEER, NEHALEM, ORE.

HUMAN SMOKE

In his review of Human Smoke (FH 139:20), Warren Kimball says, “The atomic bomb may have prompted Japan to surrender sooner, but how far away was Japan’s surrender without it?”

By all accounts, quite far. Obscure civilians may have made peace feelers, but the military ran Japan. Even after Nagasaki, it took the (unprecedented) personal intervention of the Emperor to accept the surrender. An attempted mili-tary coup came close to succeeding. But Hirohito saw the devastation (worse than Hiroshima) wrought by the March fire-bombing of Tokyo. When he saw one bomb accomplish almost the same thing, he “accepted the unacceptable,” even when his advisers could not.

The ferocity of the battle for Okinawa had confirmed that Japan would fight to the end. Allied planners initially expected from 200,000 to 400,000 casualties and millions of Japanese casualties in the invasion of the home islands. Hiroshima and Nagasaki, terrible as they were, prevented far worse consequences. I’ve talked with a lot of the men who would have been part of the invasion force. Not one regretted the dropping of the bombs. Of course, they would have been the ones getting shot at—sadly, in many cases, “with result.”

I may have misconstrued Professor Kimball’s argument, but it has become common to say that the A-bombs were unnecessary because Japan was on the brink of surrender. That argument seems based more on dislike of nuclear weapons than on the situation at the time.

Churchill in 1940 said, “We shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills...we shall never surrender” and, “You can always take one with you.” Why should anyone have expected the Japanese in 1945 to be any less resolute?

JONATHAN A. HAYES, CORVALLIS, ORE.

1. I am not defending Mr. Baker or his book Human Smoke. Misquoting anyone or inventing quotes with no source citation is an abomination.

2. I have no idea why Churchill did not carry out his threat to bomb German towns.

3. But unless it can be established that Churchill realized the enormity of the moral lapse that carrying out his threat would have meant, I am not persuaded of his innocence.

T.N. SIRINIVASAN, YALE UNIVERSITY

Editor’s response:

1. Good. There is plenty of legitimate criticism of Churchill, some on our website; no need to invent any.

2. If you have no idea, you need to read more about Churchill: the one leader on any side in World War II to question the morality of bombing civilians. I respectfully recommend Christopher Harmon’s article, “Are We Beasts?” (http://xrl.us/ot2hh), whose title is from WSC’s exclamation as he watched a film showing the bombing of Germany by the RAF. No such exclamation was ever uttered by the Germans.

3. Let me get this straight. Not only must Churchill have never so much as thought of a “moral lapse.” He is also required to “realize the enormity of the thought”—while London is being devastated by Hitler’s flying bombs—without committing the act! I suspect that very few leaders could survive being held to a standard of morality that requires them not even to think of, much less commit, an immoral act.
Consistency of Principle: A Churchillian Characteristic

“Democracy is based on a number of fallacies, the grandest of which is to believe that public opinion is the sum of all individual wisdom. It assumes that individuals are capable of arriving at informed and balanced opinions, which may be true, but completely ignores the fact that when those same informed and balanced individuals come together in large numbers, logic and reason are often cast aside, and any gaps left in the framework of opinion are filled with raw, undisciplined emotion.

“Politicians don’t believe in country any more. Or conscience. Only political convenience. You talk about being anchored to your principles, but then the wind changes so you pull up anchor and sail off in some new direction....You stand for election with stars in your eyes, but the moment you get elected they put you in blinkers so you don’t get lost going through the voting lobby.”

—Michael Dobbs, Whispers of Betrayal, 2000

Larry Arnn, President of Hillsdale College and a Churchillian scholar since the 1970s, when he worked for Sir Martin Gilbert on the official biography, is perpetual educator. A recent chat with him helped me better to understand the tasks we face in developing Churchill Centre educational programs.

“Churchill left such a record, and so carefully crafted it himself, that I think many scholars fail to get their hands around the vast acreage,” Dr. Arnn said. “For instance, so few have grasped that Churchill saw in Socialism, National Socialism and Communism aspects of the same phenomenon: a challenge to liberty. It is really quite incredible that he could have reached such a sharp understanding of a danger that is with us yet.

“History is a cheap way to get experience, and this fellow Churchill told us the most about history. He was the only great statesman of recent times, perhaps for many times, who was able to crystallize his thought through eloquent writing. The downside is that so few realize the depth to which he thought about these things. The upside is that this is a tremendous opportunity for The Churchill Centre: to offer Churchill as an avenue to save the teaching of history.”

Eighteen years ago in Finest Hour 71, we published an article proposing the establishment of what became The Churchill Centre, then called a “Center for Churchill Studies.” Much of it was inspired by Larry Arnn:

“There are two, equally important, reasons to study Churchill. The first is acceptable to everyone: his involvement with 20th century history was crucial and remains highly relevant to present-day international affairs. The second has to do with Churchill’s philosophy of statesmanship—which is, however, far more controversial....The vast majority of modern academics don’t like Churchill, and dismiss him from consideration. He held different views than they hold. He stands for different principles than they. He upheld a regime, a way of life, that is contrary to all they believe.”

We are familiar with the popular arguments. Events not people, isms not persons, make history. Hitler would have been stopped with Chamberlain or Attlee in charge. Halifax and Alf Landon would have done exactly the same as Churchill and Roosevelt. Only “national interests” govern the behavior of national leaders, and so on.

But there was more to Churchill than ambition, national interests, or a desire to save the Empire, though all of those counted with him. Much more than Roosevelt, Churchill thought about governance among free peoples. There is ground to believe that Churchill realized before Roosevelt, though he never said it publicly, that the Empire and British predominance were winding down—and that World War II really was, as John Charmley wrote, “The End of Glory.” He certainly realized it by 1943, sitting at the table with Roosevelt and Stalin at Teheran, when he spoke of “the poor little English donkey who was the only one, the only one of the three, who knew the right way home.” Yet there was nothing he would not do, no British resource he would not tap, to win the war against Nazism.

But this approach in World War II was not in any way atypical of Churchill throughout his life. Repeatedly, sometimes mistakenly, he would place principle before expediency, and certainly before party, pursuing brave and sometimes self-destructive courses with single-minded intensity and genius—genius being nicely described by Albert Einstein as “the ability to take infinite pains with every detail and to integrate each part into a masterful whole.”

Speaking in July 1936, in the wake of Hitler’s reoccupation of the Rhineland (see this issue, page 16), Churchill warned again of the German menace. And then he said, in words that are extraordinary for any politician: “I would endure with patience the roar of exultation that would go up when I was proved wrong, because it would lift a load off my heart and off the hearts of many Members. What does it matter who gets exposed or discomfited? If the country is safe, who cares for individual politicians, in or out of office?”

Consistency—not always of tactics (vide Russia) but of principle—is what makes Churchill unique: a statesman Larry Arnn believes ranks with Washington and Lincoln in history. As do I.

RML
DATELINES

PORTS SPORTS
LONDON, OCTOBER 20TH—The story of how some of Britain’s prominent sports stars, politicians and celebrities came to the UK is set out among the records of over eighteen million inbound ship passengers which have been published for the first time. The documents, compiled by the Board of Trade at ports such as Southampton, Liverpool, and London, offer a vivid insight into the end of empire and the trends which shaped modern Britain in a period which saw the country’s population more than double from 24.5 million to 52 million. First class passenger lists from great liners such as the Queen Mary also offer a glimpse of a golden age of travel by sea from the Empire and the United States.

The most famous address in the world appears in a smudged entry for 6 July 1954, showing one “Rt Hon Sir Winston Churchill” arriving in Southampton from New York on board the Queen Elizabeth. His profession is listed as “Prime Minister” but an ink smudge appears to render “10 Downing Street.”

—JOHN BINGHAM, DAILY TELEGRAPH

CHURCHILL FICTION
Michael McMenamin (page 48) begins reviews of fictional works containing Churchill as a leading character. This inspired his co-author (of Becoming Winston Churchill), Curt Zoller, to offer a preliminary list, on which we welcome reader additions:

Fleming, Peter. The Flying Visit (illus. by Low), New York: Scribner, 1940.
Mead, Glenn. The Sands of Sakkara, New York: St Martin’s, 1999.

A NOISY WEEK
One week in October produced a bumper crop of old news, breathlessly announced as new and earthshaking, viz:

Juan March as Churchill’s alleged interlocutor with Spain’s Franco (first revealed by Martin Gilbert in 1992); WSC’s letter to his wife “in the event of my death” (Gilbert again, 1972); the recollections of Churchill’s trans-Atlantic censor (Finest Hour 115, 2002); and Peregrine Worsthorne’s savoring of “Churchill the war-monger” (dating at least to Francis Neilson’s The Churchill Legend, 1954). All interesting grist to fill this column and hopefully to amuse our readers!

1. FRANCO’S Bribes

“In the summer of 1940 Churchill was convinced that Spain would enter the war on the side of Hitler after receiving reports that Franco and the Germans were planning to invade Gibraltar. Ferrer has claimed that a British officer, Alan Hillgarth, came up with a plan to bribe the generals, believing that Franco’s high command was corrupt and, because they were not paid much, would be open to bribery.”

This is perfectly true but hardly news. Sir Martin Gilbert published

Quotation of the Season

“Democratic governments drift along the line of least resistance, taking short views, paying their way with sops and doles, and smoothing their path with pleasant-sounding platitudes. Never was there less continuity or design in their affairs, and yet towards them are coming swiftly changes which will revolutionize for good or ill not only the whole economic structure of the world but the social habits and moral outlook of every family. Democracy as a guide or motive to progress has long been known to be incompetent. None of the legislative assemblies of the great modern states represents in universal suffrage even a fraction of the strength or wisdom of the community. Great nations are no longer led by their ablest men, or by those who know most about their immediate affairs, or even by those who have a coherent doctrine.”

—WSC, “FIFTY YEARS HENCE,” STRAND MAGAZINE, DECEMBER 1931

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Churchill’s suggestion that March might be a key to Franco, and described the $10 million allocated for bribing Spanish army officers to promote Spain’s continued neutrality, in his Churchill War Papers, published between eight and sixteen years ago. However, Gilbert related, Churchill ultimately relied on Captain Hillgarth for the effort. (See “Leading Churchill Myths” on page 10.)

2. RUTH IVE’S BOOK
LONDON, OCTOBER 22ND— Ruth Ive, the wartime clerk who listened to and once censored Churchill’s trans-Atlantic phone calls to Roosevelt, who spoke about her experiences at the 2002 Churchill conference, has published a book, The Woman Who Censored Churchill (History Press, £19.99), reports Val Hennessy of The Mail Online. Before each caller was connected, even if it were the King, her duty was to tell them: “The enemy is recording your conversation and will compare it with previous information in his possession. Great discretion is necessary. Any indiscretion will be reported by the censor to the highest authority.”

Ive, now 90, monitored all VIP transatlantic calls, but the ones between WSC and FDR were the most interesting. Her job was to cut them off at the first sign of inadvertent leaks of sensitive information,” since the British knew the Germans were intercepting the calls. Although Churchill has been accused of “leaking like a sieve,” Ive said “he was all too aware of the risks of speaking frankly...however late the hour, and however well he had dined, I can say that it never impaired his judgment of what was proper to mention.”

Only once did she “pull the plug” on Churchill, late in the war when, understandably upset about a devastating V2 rocket attack, he began to hint about its damage. Hitting the “off” switch, Ruth said: “I must remind you, sir, that there should be no mention of any damage suffered from enemy aircraft. Would you like your call reconnected?” After an “acknowledging grunt,” Churchill resumed: “Anthony, this morning...” and she cut him off again! “He sounded so upset, but I had no option other than to disconnect him again and warn him of the dangers.” She expected a blast of anger, “but the worst bombing incident to hit London since the Blitz seemed to have temporarily knocked the stuffing out of the normally bellicose statesman.”

As Mrs. Ive related in Finest Hour, Churchill ended all his top-level conversations with the phrase “KBO,” which she didn’t understand. With some embarrassment her boss explained that it meant “Keep Bugging On.” Ruth is certain that Roosevelt didn’t understand the phrase either.

Ruth Ive never met Churchill in person, Hennessy writes, “but looking back on her war work she now sees herself as ‘greatly privileged’ to have been in a position to listen to his conversations. She realised even then, young as she was, that this was a man with an exceptional personality, an amazing capacity for work and a gift for language and oratory which could inspire the nation and lead it to victory.”

3. WSC’S DEATH LETTER
LONDON, OCTOBER 22ND— A letter to be shown at “Last Post,” a World War I exhibit at the Churchill Museum in the Cabinet War Rooms in November “reveals” that Churchill would have left his wife £3000 in savings (£195,000 today), and enough shares to pay off his debts. But what the Mail, Express, Mirror and Sun all find remarkable was first published thirty-six years ago by Sir Martin Gilbert in Companion Volume III, Part II to Winston S. Churchill, the official biography (page 1098).

Although millions of men going off to war wrote similar letters to be opened in the event of their death, Churchill’s message to Clementine (17 July 1915) is well worth reading for its lyrical prose and poigniant reflections. It was written at a time when his political ambitions lay shattered, following his ouster from the Admiralty in the midst of a Cabinet crisis and an anxious battle for the Gallipoli Peninsula—an imaginative idea Churchill had not invented, but had championed all too blindly as support among his colleagues fell away.

“I am anxious that you shall get hold of all my papers,” he wrote her: “...some day I shd like the truth to be known. Randolph will carry on the lamp. Do not grieve for me too much. I am a spirit confident of my rights. Death is only an incident, & not the most important wh happens to us in this state of being. On the whole, especially since I met you my darling one I have been happy, & you have taught me how noble a woman’s heart can be. If there is anywhere else I shall be on the look out for you. Meanwhile look forward, feel free, rejoice in life, cherish the children, guard my memory. God bless you. Good bye. W.”

4. PEREGRINE GOES A’FALCONING
LONDON, OCTOBER 22ND— Winston Churchill would only have been great if he had atoned for his warmongering, wrote Peregrine Worsthorne in the online magazine The First Post (http://www.thefirstpost.co.uk). All wars are evil, writes Mr. Worsthorne (who once wrote for the Daily Telegraph), but World War II was the worst of them all because Hiroshima and Nagasaki “legalised murder on a massive scale.”

Odd. Didn’t Stalin and Hitler legalise more mass-murder (at least seven million each) than the Atomic bomb (70,000)? Do The Thoughts of Chairman Mao contain atonement? Churchill said in 1945: “We must indeed pray that these awful agencies will be made to conduct peace among the nations, and that instead of wreaking measureless havoc upon the entire globe, may become a perennial fountain of world prosperity....The bomb brought peace, but men alone can keep that peace, and henceforward they will keep it under penalties which threaten the survival not only of civilization but of humanity itself.”

>>
WARSTORNE...
Undeterred, Mr. Worsthorne plunges on: “...seldom has there been a statesman as good at glorifying war, and as indecently eager to wage war as Winston Churchill. All his works demonstrate his love of war, glamourise its glories and minimise its horrors.”

Here is Churchill glamourising war in 1944: “Remember we have a missing generation, we must never forget that—the flower of the past, lost in the great battles of the last war...There ought to be another generation of men, with their flashing lights and leading figures. We must do all we can to try to fill the gap...” And in 1947: “In each of [the two World Wars] about thirty million men were killed in battle. In the last one seven million were murdered in cold blood, mainly by the Germans. They made human slaughter-pens like the Chicago stockyards. Europe is a ruin. Many of her cities have been blown to pieces by bombs....It may well be that an even worse war is drawing near.”

Worsthorne continues: “Yet year after year shoals of books about Churchill appear—Andrew Robert’s Masters and Commanders is the latest one—which totally ignore how low under Churchill’s leadership Britain had to stoop to conquer. Churchill’s refusal to shoulder his burden of guilt is a huge disqualification for his place in this country’s pantheon.”

How many refutations do we need? Churchill, 1897: “Looking at these shapeless forms, coffined in a regulation blanket, the pride of race, the pomp of empire, the glory of war appeared but the faint and unsubstantial fabric of a dream...” 1901: “A European war cannot be anything but a cruel, heartrending struggle....” 1909: “Much as war attracts me & fascinates my mind with its tremendous situations—I feel more deeply every year—& can measure the feeling here in the midst of arms—what vile & wicked folly & barbarism it all is.” 1929: “The only test by which human beings can judge war responsibility is Aggression; and the supreme proof of Aggression is Invasion.” 1930: “War, which used to be cruel and magnificent, has now become cruel and squalid.”

Worsthorne: “When the war was on, and for some decades thereafter, veneration of Churchill was absolutely understandable; part of the legitimate self-justification of a righteous nation fighting a necessary war. So it was after all a righteous and necessary war? If so, Churchill is supposed to atone for what, exactly?”

Worsthorne: “Churchill’s refusal ever to recognise the mote in his own country’s eye or to shoulder the burden of his own individual guilt strike me as a major disqualification [sic] in this Christian country’s pantheon. Abraham Lincoln, who didn’t hesitate to do public penance on both scores after the Civil War, puts Churchill to shame.”

Er, when, during the week between the Civil War’s end and his own assassination, did Lincoln do “public penance”? Lincoln, who would have done anything to win the Civil War, admitted that if he could have saved the Union without freeing a single slave he would have done so. Churchill would have done anything to win World War II: “Once you are so unfortunate as to be drawn into a war, no price is too great to pay for an early and victorious peace.” (1901)

Winston Churchill was the only leader on either side of WW2 actually to question strategic bombing: “Are we beasts? Are we taking this too far?” (1943). The only one. He even argued with Air Marshal Harris over the horror being inflicted on Germany. Dresden, for which he is frequently blamed, was bombed at Soviet request by Attlee.

Worsthorne: “Truth to tell, war-mongering is a far more damaging and infantile folly than is pacifism, and it is only by dimming Churchill’s fame that this truth can ever again shine forth.”

Refuting such claims is too easy.
Omit Churchill’s quests for peace before World War I (thwarted by a war-monger in Berlin); before World War II (thwarted by the refusal of peaceful nations to see the obvious); and after World War II (thwarted by Eisenhower’s rejection of his call for a “summit” with Stalin’s successors). Consider only the themes of the argument—in the words of Professor Warren Kimball:

“...the themes are repetitively evident: war is bad, regardless of the causes; bombing civilians is evil, regardless of the circumstances; anti-Semitism is unacceptable, particularly as practiced by Churchill and the Roosevelts; pacifists are invariably perceptive...This is childish (as opposed to childlike) reasoning that throws up pie-in-the-sky idealism without the slightest genuflection toward practicality, unintended consequences, or common sense: a self-righteous primal scream against physical evil that blames just the bombers. No bombing—absolutely none—would have happened except for Hitler and the Nazis, so let us keep our focus where it belongs, on first causes.”

It is wisely observed that the only two countries where World War II is still being fought are Britain and Russia. So outbursts by British iconoclasts are to be expected. But scholarly thought has long since relegated Churchill’s “war-mongering” to the fever swamps of the unread and the illiterate. Churchill made many mistakes, but on the key question of his time he was right:

“...if you will not fight for the right when you can easily win without bloodshed; if you will not fight when your victory will be sure and not too costly; you may come to the moment when you will have to fight with all the odds against you and only a precarious chance of survival. There may even be a worse case. You may have to fight when there is no hope of victory, because it is better to perish than live as slaves.” (The Gathering Storm, 1948).

FUNERAL VAN LOSES
SWANAGE, DORSET, SEPTEMBER 15TH—Many have asked for an update on the Swanage Railway Trust’s plans for the Churchill van, which was successfully returned last year to the UK from the USA and which has since been subject to a Heritage Lottery Fund bid (Finest Hour 129:6 and 133:8).

Unfortunately, the Lottery Fund has declined to support the Trust’s £50,000 bid to restore the Churchill funeral van and use it to house a museum focusing on the role of railways in the Second World War. Swanage Trust was disappointed by this decision, which may reflect the reduced funds available for heritage projects following the diversion of resources to the Olympic games.

The Railway Trust thanks the many people who have helped to secure the return of the car from California, where its future was uncertain. Special thanks go to the Heritage Railway Association, the Imperial War Museum, The Churchill Centre & Museum, The Duke of Marlborough, Dorset County Council and many others for their enthusiastic support.

The Trust is now seeking alternative funding for the project. Offers of support and further details of the project are available from Steve Doughty (stephen.doughty1@btopenworld.com), Deputy Chairman Swanage Railway Trust, tel (44) 7860-108754.

ERRATUM
Finest Hour 139, page 45, re Japanese aircraft: the G4M “Betty” is the top picture and the G3M Nell is at the bottom. Thanks to Gene Lassers for this, and for advising us: “In reading up on the situation, the majority of planes used in the attack were G3M Nells.”

DON CARMICHAEL
HANOVER, N.H., OCTOBER 6TH—Donald Scott Carmichael died today at the fine age of 96, leaving his wife Mary of 67 years, two daughters and four grandchildren. He studied at Harvard, where he was editor of the Crimson, and at the University of Michigan School of Law. Don’s career included senior executive positions at Stouffer Foods, Schrafts, and Delaware North Corporation, owner >>
DON CARMICHAEL...
of the Boston Bruins. A lifelong Democrat, he was a member of President Johnson’s Task Force on the War Against Poverty, a delegate to the 1960 and 1964 Democratic conventions, and served on the Ohio Civil Rights Commission. He served on the boards of the National Conference of Christians and Jews and the Cleveland United Negro College Fund, and was president of Karamu House, an interracial cultural settlement house in Cleveland.

I knew Don as a collector of Roosevelt and Churchill memorabilia, from first editions and autographs to the commemorative souvenirs he referred to as “bric-a-brac,” which I eventually sold for him through my former business. My colleague Glenn Horowitz sold many of Don’s Roosevelt and Churchill books and holographs, the catalogues for which were themselves unique. But Don’s interests were broader yet. For instance, he had a collection of letters exchanged with the exiled Kaiser Wilhelm, in which Don and the Emperor pondered what might have happened had Germany accepted Churchill’s idea for a “naval holiday,” and stayed out of war in 1914....

When Don began looking for a retirement home in 1987 I nominated New Hampshire, kidding him that his party hadn’t yet managed to overburden the tax structure as it had in neighboring Vermont. Don replied that I must be a Republican, and I said I was really a 19th century Federalist, now become an anarchist. He bought that and raised me one, saying he thought I fit the 18th century best. He and Mary found lovely Sugartop Farm in Lyme, hard by the Connecticut River near Dartmouth.

The following year they were at our Bretton Woods Conference to hear Alistair Cooke...and then-Governor John Sununu—Bush I’s campaign manager in the 1988 presidential campaign. Don even smiled when Paul Robinson, Reagan’s Ambassador to Canada, thanked the Governor by saying: “There’s no secret where my sympathies lie.” Paul then diplomatically suggested that Canadians present vote for Brian Mulroney in the upcoming Canadian election, and Sununu whispered: “There goes the 3000-mile undefended border.” Don and I laughed about it later because he was that kind of person.

Leading Churchill Myths (16)
“Leslie Howard Kept Spain Out of the War”
(Or: “The Brain in Spain was Mainly Off the Plane”)

On 6 October the Daily Telegraph (London) reported that British actor Leslie Howard (Gone with the Wind, Berkeley Square, Scarlet Pimpernel, Never the Twain Shall Meet), whose plane was shot down returning to Britain from Spain via Portugal in June 1943, was returning from a secret mission on behalf of Churchill, to prevent Spanish dictator Francisco Franco from joining the Axis powers (http://xrl.us/ot49n). Spanish author José Rey-Ximena has published a book claiming that Leslie Howard, with the help of his former lover, Conchita Montenegro, secretly met with Franco. He interviewed Montenegro before her death in 2007 at the age of 96. She claimed she had had an affair with Howard after the pair starred together in the 1931 film Never the Twain Shall Meet. She later married a senior member of the far-right Falangist party and, using his influence, arranged the meeting. But Howard was unable to report back when his plane was shot down by the Luftwaffe. “He has never been recognised as either a spy or a hero,” said Rey-Ximena.

This reminded us of the recent story about Churchill’s “secret peace offers to Mussolini,” which alas are in letters at the bottom of Lake Como, where nobody can read them. To be sure, we asked the opinion of two oracles.

David Stafford, the leading scholar of Churchill and Intelligence, replied: “I myself would never trust an aging ‘luvvie,’ however glamorous and seductive a past she enjoyed, as an independent historical source. Besides, by 1943 Franco needed no persuading not to join Hitler; the Allies had landed in North Africa in November 1942 and the wily Franco could see the way the pendulum was swinging. I think this is complete fantasy.” (Professor Stafford’s view is shared by John Grigg in 1943 and by Richard Lamb in Churchill as War Leader, who note that the concerns about Franco bolting in 1943 were mainly those of the Americans.)

Sir Martin Gilbert replied: “It is the year that is wrong. In Volume I of my
Churchill War Papers (page 161, footnote 2), I identify Juan March, in a note from Churchill to Admirals Phillips and Godfrey, as capable of playing an important role “in bringing about friendly relations with Spain...” The note anticipated Churchill’s meeting with Juan March at 5pm that afternoon. But the date was 26 September 1939! Churchill’s main man in Spain was Hillgarth.” (See page 7.)

Captain Alan Hillgarth, Naval Attaché in Madrid 1939-43 and Chief of British Naval Intelligence, Eastern Theatre, 1944-46, has several index entries in the War Papers, Volume III. On 29 April 1941 Churchill minuted Eden: “The basis of Captain Hillgarth’s policy is of the most secret character, and cannot possibly be mentioned.” Gilbert’s footnote explains that “Hillgarth had been personally charged by Churchill, at the end of May 1940, with the task of keeping Spain out of the war. To this end Churchill had allocated $10 million...for the necessary payments to Spanish officials, primarily senior army officers” (569). The Hillgarth references clearly show that Churchill’s concern about Spain joining Hitler peaked in 1939-41, and was virtually nonexistent by 1943.

Rey-Ximena’s theory doesn’t even pass the logic test. Given the ongoing role of Hillgarth, if Churchill wanted someone to pry Franco loose from an unexpected lurch to the Axis in 1943, why would he send a film actor?

The implication that Howard’s aircraft was shot down because the Germans had somehow caught onto his spy mission is as absurd as the notion that it was downed because the Germans mistook Howard’s bodyguard, Chenhalls, for Churchill—or the claims of Linda Stokes, Churchill’s bodyguard’s great-niece, that Howard and Chenhalls, were “doubles,” used to throw the Germans off Churchill’s movements (he was returning from North Africa at the time; see FH 131:6).

In the letters column of Finest Hour 133, Professor M.R.D. Foot, the Oxford author of SOE: An Outline History, offered “a more banal but more plausible” reason for the destruction of Leslie Howard’s aircraft: “Another of the passengers in Howard’s plane, also killed, was Wilfred Israel, the Jewish owner of a large department store in prewar Berlin, who happened to have a British as well as a German passport, and had so escaped from Germany. He had been in Lisbon, pursuing work to rescue Jewish children from the Nazis’ clutches. He had long been on the Gestapo’s black list. German secret service officers watched all departures from Lisbon airport from the airport cafe, which overlooked the boarding point. It is not hard to assume that one of them recognised Israel and rang up a friend in the Luftwaffe.”

Churchill himself summarized the Franco worry of 1940 in a speech in the Commons on 24 May 1944: “When our present Ambassador to Spain, the Rt. Hon. Gentleman the Member for Chelsea [Sir Samuel Hoare], went to Madrid almost exactly four years ago to a month, we arranged to keep his airplane waiting on the airfield, as it seemed almost certain that Spain, whose dominant party were under the influence of Germany because Germany had helped them so vigorously in the recently-ended civil war, would follow the example of Italy and join the victorious Germans in the war against Great Britain. Indeed, at that time the Germans proposed to the Spanish Government that triumphal marches of German troops should be held in the principal Spanish cities, and I have no doubt that they suggested to them that the Germans would undertake, in return for the virtual occupation of their country, the seizure of Gibraltar, which would then be handed back to a Germanized Spain. This last would have been easier said than done.

“There is no doubt that if Spain had yielded to German blandishments and pressure at that juncture our burden would have been much heavier. The Straits of Gibraltar would have been closed, and all access to Malta would have been cut off from the West. All the Spanish coast would have become the nesting-place of German U-boats. I certainly did not feel at the time that I should like to see any of those things happen, and none of them did happen. Our Ambassador deserves credit for the influence he rapidly acquired and which continually grew....But the main credit is undoubtedly due to the Spanish resolve to keep out of the war. They had had enough of war, and they wished to keep out of it.”


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Q I'm a filmmaker preparing for Swiss public television a documentary on the life of Swiss General Henri Guisan. On 17 September 1946, Winston Churchill together with his daughter Mary visited Castle Allmendingen, where a lunch or dinner party was held, and Churchill met with Henri Guisan. I would like to find out if photographs or even sound or film footage of that event might be found.

—FELICE ZENONI (F.ZENONI@MESCHUGGEFILM.CH), ZURICH

A There are 33 references to snuff in your digital archive, although many refer to “snuff color” or “snuffing out,” or to colleagues who used snuff. Two references are to silver snuff boxes presented to WSC by the Duchess of Buccleuch and his friends at the Other Club. Here are the rest. We assume you can look up the publishers on www.bookfinder.com.

Kennedy, The Business of War, 105: “Churchill called continuously for more champagne, remarking it was very good stuff. He said he wanted to see the Germans out of Cyrenaica quickly—he had thought of giving up cigars till they were out, and then had decided to give up snuff instead. A few days later he said he had changed his mind, for he did not see why he should give up either snuff or cigars for any German.” (Circa 1942.)

Channon, Chips: The Diaries of Sir Henry Channon, 439: “28 September [1949]. Winston’s childish side is ever active. During lunch he was courted by the other club’s doorman. He was humming and chirping away. … He opened his silver box, pinched a pinch of snuff from the doorman of the club, and put it into his nose.”

An amusing reference from Jack Fishman’s My Darling Clementine: Clementine Churchill, campaigning for her ailing husband in Dundee, “bowed to the audience and smilingly took her seat on the platform. A fresh supply of snuff was released by someone and the plat-

form party were amongst its first victims. Clementine was overwhelmed by an almost uncontrollable bout of sneezing. She rose to speak, and, finally mastering the urge to sneeze, said: “I’m glad to see that you are all alive and kicking in Dundee.”

Bottom line: Churchill was a fairly regular user, but unlike cigars there is no documentation on the brand of snuff he preferred, unless it resides in a tobaconist’s bill at the Churchill Archives, to which we directed Tim.

STYLE AND RHETORIC

Q Is there a good book on the origins of Churchill’s own style? Gibbon and Macaulay are often mentioned but I have have not found a serious analysis of his speeches in terms of rhetorical techniques. —ROBERT JOHNSON

A You may like to consult the following, most of which should be available via the Churchill specialist booksellers or via www.bookfinder.com:

Manfred Weidhorn, Churchill’s Rhetoric and Political Discourse (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1987). Weidhorn is the dean of scholars on Churchill’s literary contributions: an erudite guide to Churchill’s use of language in his persuasive oratory.

Sir Norman Birkett, “Churchill the Orator,” in Charles Eade, editor, Churchill by His Contemporaries (London: Hutchinson, 1953; New York: Simon & Schuster, 1954; London: Reprint Society, 1955). This is a great work in its own right, packed as it is with first-person observations of Churchill in all his roles and moods.


Robert Rhodes James, “Churchill the Parliamentarian, Orator, and Statesman,” in Robert Blake and Wm.

**CAMELS**

*Finest Hour* 137:7 presents the famous picture of Clementine, Winston, Gertrude Bell and T. E. Lawrence astride camels in front of the Pyramids, as well as WSC’s quote about having fallen off. Did this happen before or after the picture was taken? Also, I have read that he “slid off” as opposed to “fell off.” Which mode of dismounting did he use? I may be the champion of nit-picking, but I am just curious if there are answers to these questions.

HARRY BOSCH, SILVERDALE, WASH.

The date of the camel ride to the Pyramids was Sunday, 20 March 1921, during the Cairo conference. The fullest account is in W.H. Thompson, *Sixty Minutes with Winston Churchill* (London: Johnson, 1953, 11-12):

“We were told that the journey would take about two-and-a-half hours. The camels were provided by the Egyptian Camel Corps and we were accompanied by a motley collection of Arab dignitaries on their splendid stallions. They made a colourful party.

Galloping on a camel is not my idea of pleasure. It resembles being turned round in a milk churn at fast speed. Nevertheless, gallop I had to—if I was going to keep up with Mr. Churchill. He entered into the spirit of the matter with boyish zest and everything proceeded satisfactorily if somewhat hectically, until the British statesman fell off his camel.

I was alarmed, for Mr. Churchill lay quite still on the ground, and was surrounded by the Arabs on their steeds shouting out all kinds of advice. It seemed to me that he was in imminent danger of being trampled to death by the horses. Winston was the least concerned person there. He soon got to his feet and, in spite of offers to give him a horse, insisted on remounting the camel.

Lawrence had difficulty in containing his laughter. He told Churchill: “It was only to be expected, you know, Winston. The old camel blew himself out when he heard that he was to have the honour of carrying such a great man, but when he saw the way that you ride he decided that he must have been misinformed.

Lawrence had difficulty in containing his laughter. He told Churchill: “It was only to be expected, you know, Winston. The old camel blew himself out when he heard that he was to have the honour of carrying such a great man, but when he saw the way that you ride he decided that he must have been misinformed. When we reached Sakara, I had had enough of riding camels to last me the rest of my life. I looked forward to making the return journey by car.

Lawrence and Churchill had other ideas though. They were quite willing that the rest of the party should return by car, but decided that they would return as they came. Never did I regret ideas though. They were quite willing that the rest of the party should return by car, but decided that they would return as they came. Never did I regret by car, but decided that they would return as they came. Never did I regret making the return journey by car.

I do not know. Neither do I know how I should have stopped the camel if the security position had demanded it. Winston Churchill made no comment at all upon my ride until I was getting back into his car—a painful experience. Then he leant forward and said: “Well done, Thompson. You’re sprightly today. I’ve not seen you jump about like this for a long time.”

The BBC video “Churchill’s Bodyguard,” vol. 2, “Lawrence and Walter Save the Day,” has some footage of the camel expedition with extracts from Thompson’s account of the incident. One does not see Churchill actually falling off the camel, but the explanation is that the girth slipped and Churchill “fell sideways to the ground.” He famously remounted saying, “I started on a camel; I want to finish on a camel.”

The famous photograph is on the cover of the DVD. Both Lawrence and Thompson are wearing a hat, shirt and tie as if in the City of London; Gertrude Bell looks over-dressed, while the only person correctly attired is WSC!

Camel behaviour helps explain what happened. In the 1911 *Britannica*, Sir F. Palgrave wrote that if
docile means stupid, well and good...But if the epithet is intended to designate an animal that takes an interest in its rider so far as a beast can, that in some way understands his intentions, or shares them in a subordinate fashion, that obeys from a sort of submissive or half-fellow-feeling with his master, like the horse or elephant, then I say that the camel is by no means docile—very much the contrary. He takes no heed of his rider, pays no attention whether he be on his back or not, walks straight on when once set ageing, merely because he is too stupid to turn aside, and then should some tempting thorn or green branch allure him out of the path, continues to walk on in the new direction simply because he is too dull to turn back into the right road. In a word, he is from first to last an undomesticated and savage animal rendered serviceable by stupidity alone, without much skill on his master’s part, or any cooperation on his own, save that of an extreme passiveness. Neither attachment nor even habit impresses him; never tame, though not wide-awake enough to be exactly wild.

Remember this the next time you are invited to mount a camel. —JRL

*****

Having also ridden a camel eighteen years ago in the Outback on our 1991 Churchill Tour of Australia, I can confirm everything Sir F. Palgrave recorded, except that our well-fed camels did not deviate from the path when they spotted a succulent thorn bush. Staying aboard, assuming a tight cinch, is not hard, there being numerous hand-holds afforded by the saddle, and, if need be, by the camel himself. But it is not something one does elegantly. The person who looked best doing it was Charlotte Nicholson of Dallas, who had gone shopping at Nieman Marcus: “Give me an outfit to wear riding a camel,” she said, and they did. —RML
125 YEARS AGO:
Winter 1883-84 • Age 9
“Rather greedy at meals...”

On 5 December, 1883, Winston wrote to his father with news of school: “We had gymnastic trials yesterday. I got 39 marks out of 90. I beat some of the boys in two classes above me. The play room is getting ready for concert we are learning to sing for it. It is about 75 feet long and 20 broad and lighted by 920 cp [candlepower] lamps it will show a very bright light won’t it.”

During the first term of 1884 at St. George’s, Churchill was beginning to improve his marks, especially in mathematics. French was not so good: “Fair—does not learn the grammar with sufficient care.” History and geography were better but not always: “Very erratic—sometimes exceedingly good.” The overall report from his Headmaster was underwhelming, if not *ad hominem*: “He is, I hope, beginning to realize that school means work and discipline. He is rather greedy at meals.”

Winston did not react well to authority at St. George’s and we know from his autobiography *My Early Life* that he detested the canings, which eventually led his mother to remove him from the school. We do not know precisely at what age Churchill created the following legend at St. George’s, recounted by Maurice Baring in a 1922 memoir:

Dreadful legends were told about Winston Churchill, who had been taken away from the school. His naughtiness appeared to have surpassed anything. He had been flogged for taking sugar from the pantry, and so far from being penitent, he had taken the Headmaster’s sacred straw hat from where it hung over the door and kicked it to pieces. His sojourn at this school had been one long feud with authority. The boys did not seem to sympathise with him. Their point of view was conventional and priggish.

100 YEARS AGO:
Winter 1908-09 • Age 34
“Gigantic dodge to cheat the poor”

As President of the Board of Trade, Churchill had much to say about the economic crisis which—like the 2008 version—began in the U.S. and quickly spread throughout the world. Credit became scarce. Churchill believed that Great Britain handled the panic better than its commercial competitors, the United States and Germany. In a speech to the Leicester Chamber of Commerce on 14 January, 1909, he said:

The public at large, I think, inclined to take too gloomy a view of the general situation at the present moment. A reaction in the volume of trade always follows years of abnormal activity, and what is happening now is no more that what was foreseen by many who were best able to judge. In the other great commercial countries of the world, in the United States and in Germany, the reaction has been in many respects more marked than it has been with us, and in those countries, in the United States especially, it has entailed a severe financial crisis. Here in England at the end of 1907 there were high rates of money, but there was no sign of panic, no breakdown in credit. Commerce was not denied its usual accommodation, and I do not think any bank restricted its loans to the legitimate trader who had good security to offer. When we remember that in the United States at the close of 1907 there was practically a general suspension of specie payment, and that in Germany in the beginning of 1908 the monetary stringency and pressure were so great that—so I am informed—credits were very largely withdrawn from the commercial enterprise of the country, I think we are entitled to derive considerable satisfaction from the evidences of financial strength and stability which Great Britain has very notably displayed.

A general election was thought less than a year away. Churchill was often on the attack against the Conservative Party for their “Tariff Reform” proposals which were, in fact, protectionist tax increases by any other name—a fact Churchill was only too happy to draw to the public’s attention. As he said at a political meeting in Nottingham on 29 January 1909:

If the Conservative party win the election, they have made it perfectly clear that it is their intention to impose a complete protective tariff, and to raise the money for ambitious armaments and colonial projects by taxing the poor. They have declared, with a frankness which is at any rate remarkable, that they will immediately proceed to put a tax on bread, a tax on meat, a tax on timber, and an innumerable schedule of taxes on all unmanufactured articles imported into the United Kingdom; that is to say that they will take by all these taxes a large sum of money from the pockets of the wage-earners by making them pay more for the food they eat, the houses they live in, and the comforts and conveniences which they require in their homes; and that a great part of this large sum of money will be divided between the landlords and the manufacturers in the shape of increased profits, and even that part of it which does reach the Exchequer is to be given back to those same classes in the shape of reductions in income tax and in direct taxation. Do not allow yourself to be drawn from this plain view of what is called...
the Tariff "Reform" movement by ingenious sophistries which have often been exposed, by appeals to sentiment of a cheap and false character, or by delusions about taxing the foreigner. (Cheers.) Such treacle is scarcely fit to catch flies with (laughter)—and if you face the policy with which we are now threatened by the Conservative party fairly and searchingly, you will see that, stripped of its disguises and stripped of its ornaments, it is nothing less than a deliberate attempt on the part of important sections of the propertied classes to transfer their existing burdens to the shoulders of the masses of the people, and to gain greater profits for the investment of their capital by charging higher prices. (Cheers.)

Churchill took delight all his life in using ridicule to poke fun at opponents, but they tended not to enjoy it nearly as much as he did. Many of his victims accused him of engaging in what today in the United States would be called "negative attacks." Here was Churchill's reply to such sensitive feelings:

I must say I have never heard of a party which was in such a jumpy, nervous state as our opponents are at this present time. If one is led in the course of speaking, as I sometimes am (laughers and cheers), to speak a little firmly and bluntly about the Conservative Tariff "Reformers," they become almost speechless with indignation. (Laughter.) They are always in a state of incipient political apoplexy, while as for the so-called Liberal Unionists, whenever they are criticized they run off whining and complain that it is unchivalrous to attack them while Mr. Chamberlain is disabled. (Laughter and cheers.) Sorry I am that he is out of the battle, not only on personal but on public grounds. His fiercest opponents would welcome his re-entry into the political arena, if only for the fact that we should then have a man to deal with and someone whose statement of the case for his side would be clear and bold, whose speeches would be worth reading and worth answering, instead of the melancholy marionettes whom the wire-pullers of the Tariff Reform League are accustomed to exhibit on provincial platforms. (Laughter.) But I hope you will not let these pretexts or complaints move you or prevent you from calling a spade a spade, a tax a tax, a protective tariff a gigantic dodge to cheat the poor. The newlywed Churchills had been living in Winston's old, cramped quarters at 12 Bolton Street. The lease for that expired in February 1909 and they signed a new eighteen-year lease for 33 Eccleston Square. They promptly began renovations which included lots of bookcases, Winston writing in a letter to Clementine that "All the bookcases are in position (I have ordered two more for the side window of the alcove)."

75 YEARS AGO:
Winter 1933-34 • Age 59
"A new situation has been created"

As winter approached, the Nazi party had obtained an iron grip on Germany in an astonishingly short period. As Martin Gilbert wrote in Volume V of the Official Biography: "By mid-November in Germany, there were at least 100,000 opponents of the Nazi regime in concentration camps, and more than 50,000 Germans had fled abroad in search of refuge. On November 12 a General Election was held at which only the Nazi Party was allowed to canvass, with the result that it secured 95% of the vote.

Churchill addressed the dire implications of this in a speech on defense in the Commons on 7 February, 1934:

I remember in the days of the late Conservative Administration...that we thought it right to take as a rule of guidance that there would be no major war within ten years in which we should be engaged...No one could take that principle as a guide today. I am quite certain that [no] Cabinet... however pacific and peace-loving could possibly arrange the basis of their naval and military organisation upon such an assumption as that. A new situation has been created, largely, I fear...by the sudden uprush of Nazism in Germany, with the tremendous covert armaments which are proceeding there today....We are vulnerable as we have never been before.

Churchill returned to the subject on 8 March 1934, lamenting that the government was proposing to spend only an extra £130,000 in its attempt to achieve air parity:

It is not to be disputed that we are in a dangerous position today. This is a very good White Paper. The opening paragraph sets forth a most admirable declaration, but what is there behind it? £130,000. Very fine words. It must have taken the Cabinet a long time to agree to them—with the Air Minister drafting them and passing them round. They give great paper satisfaction. But what is there behind them? £130,000. It is not the slightest use of concealing the facts....We are only half the strength of France, our nearest neighbour. Germany is arming fast, and no one is going to stop her. That seems quite clear. No one proposes a preventive war to stop Germany breaking the Treaty of Versailles. She is going to arm, she is doing it, she has been doing it. I have not any knowledge of the details, but people are well aware that those very gifted people, with their science and with their factories, with what they call their "Air Sport," are capable of developing with great rapidity a most powerful air force for all purposes, offensive and defensive, within a very short period of time.

Churchill’s speech took on its most ominous tone when he added that Germany was now controlled by “a handful of autocrats who are the absolute masters of that gifted nation...”;

I dread the day when the means of threatening the heart of the British Empire should pass into the hands of the present rulers of Germany. I think we should be in a position which would be odious to every man who values freedom of action and independence, and also in a position of the utmost peril for our crowded, peaceful population, engaged in their daily toil. I dread that day, but it is not, perhaps, far distant. It is, perhaps, only a year, or perhaps eighteen months, distant. Not come yet—at least, I believe, or I hope and pray. But it is not far distant. There is still time for us to take the necessary measures, but it is the measures we want. Not this paragraph in this White Paper; we want the measures. It is no good writing that first paragraph and then producing £130,000. We want the measures to achieve parity.
The Rhineland, in western Germany, is washed by the River Rhine in the east and bounded by France and the Benelux countries in the west. It includes the industrial Ruhr Valley, and such famous cities as Aachen, Bonn, Cologne, Düsseldorf, Essen, Koblenz, Mainz, Mannheim, Wiesbaden and Wuppertal.

At the end of World War I the Rhineland, along with a number of bridgeheads into Germany proper at places like Cologne, was militarily occupied by the victorious Allies. Though the occupation was to last through 1935, troops withdrew in 1930 as a good-will gesture to the Weimar Republic following the Locarno Treaties, signed in 1925 to normalize relations with Germany. But, quite unacceptably to Germans, the Allies were authorized to reoccupy the Rhineland any time Germany violated provisions of the Versailles Treaty.

On Saturday, 7 March 1936, a few thousand German troops reoccupied the Rhineland as a rejoicing populace waved swastika flags. They had orders to “turn back and not to resist” if challenged by the all-dominant French Army. Hitler later said that the forty-eight hours following his action were the most tense of his life.

The Rhineland was a watershed in history—the event which divides Ian Kershaw’s two masterly volumes of Hitler biography. Though he defended it on several grounds, the coup marked Hitler’s first foray into territory where he was not legally permitted. Churchill admirers correctly cite the Rhineland as first proof of Churchill’s warnings about Hitler since 1933; but debate continues over what Churchill proposed to do about it.

Typically, Churchill early recognized the crisis to come, predicting Hitler’s move to his wife on 17 January 1936: “The League of Nations Union folk, who have done their best to get us disarmed, may find themselves confronted by terrible consequences.”
GENESIS

Churchill’s expectations were well-founded. Hitler too was thinking of reoccupying the Rhineland and anxious for ways to justify it, according to Joachim von Ribbentrop, who later became Hitler’s foreign minister:

…it occurred to me that it might help a peaceful outcome if we declared ourselves willing to return to the League of Nations [which Germany had left in November 1933]. I made a note and put it on the table. In the morning the Führer rang me quite unexpectedly: he wanted to come to see me to discuss something very important. When he arrived he said: “Ribbentrop, it occurred to me last night how we can occupy the Rhineland without any friction. We return to the League!...I took up my note from the table and showed it to him....Is there not such a thing as telepathy?"

At Ribbentrop’s suggestion Hitler marched on a Saturday, while the French and British were enjoying the weekend (a tactic he would employ frequently), and issued a diplomatic memorandum defending his action:

France has replied to the repeated friendly offers and peaceful assurances made by Germany by infringing the Rhine Pact through a military alliance with the Soviet Union exclusively directed against Germany. In this manner, however, the Locarno Rhine Pact has lost its inner meaning and ceased in practice to exist. Consequently, Germany regards herself for her part as no longer bound by this dissolved treaty.

Hitler balanced his bitter pill with a sweet: the offer of a security system establishing “a real pacification of Europe between states that are equal in rights, and Germany’s return to the League of Nations provided she eventually got back the colonies she had been deprived of at Versailles.” Yet Hitler had “personally given his assurance about Locarno” to Eden in 1934.

REACTION

The question turned on how France would react. Would she march? Would she demand Britain march with her? Would she demand intervention by the League of Nations? Or just dither and do nothing? Eden, Churchill believed, favored action:

In a determined speech he declared that England would stand by France in the future, and he insisted upon “Staff Conversations” being proclaimed. This was the most he could wring from the Baldwin Cabinet, and it was a good deal more than anyone else could have got.

Unfortunately for “staff conversations,” the French military was led by Gustave-Maurice Gamelin, a former aide to Marshal Joffre who would later lead the Anglo-French armies to perdition following the German onslaught of 1940: “…in mufti he was just another nondescript fonctionnaire…under pressure he became everything a commander ought not to be: indecisive, given to issuing impulsive orders which he almost always countermanded, and timid to and beyond a fault.”

The rot in France had already gone a long way: the French government may have yearned for a way to stop Hitler invading other places; French generals were more worried about stopping him from invading France herself.

The bulk of opinion was that France was unwilling to act, with or without Britain. But was she? Not according to Churchill, describing the resolve of Pierre-Etienne Flandin, the French foreign minister, who arrived in London on 11 March:

He told me that he proposed to demand from the British Government simultaneous mobilisation of the land, sea, and air forces of both countries, and that he had received assurances of support from all the nations of the “Little Entente” [Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Yugoslavia, supported by France] and from other States. He read out an impressive list of the replies received. There was no doubt that superior strength still lay with the Allies of the former war. They had only to act to win.

Heartened by Flandin’s attitude, Churchill urged him to demand a meeting with the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, who, as Churchill saw it, handed him a dusty response:

Mr. Baldwin explained that although he knew little of foreign affairs he was able to interpret accurately the feelings of the British people. And they wanted peace. M. Flandin says that he rejoined that the only way to ensure this was to stop Hitlerite aggression while such action was still possible. France had no wish to drag Great Britain into war; she asked for no practical aid, and she would herself undertake what would be a simple police operation, as, according to French information, the German troops in the Rhineland had orders to withdraw if opposed in a forcible manner. Flandin asserts that he said that all that France asked of her Ally was a free hand.

Churchill realized that Flandin was putting his own spin on the situation: “How could Britain have restrained France from action to which, under the Locarno Treaty, she was legally entitled? In the event, however, Baldwin’s answer ended any chance of French resistance. Flandin, Churchill wrote, returned to France convinced, first that his own divided country could not be united except in the presence of a strong will-power in Britain, and secondly that, so far from this being forthcoming, no strong impulse could be expected from her. Quite wrongly he plunged into the dismal conclusion that the only hope for France was in an arrangement with an ever more aggressive Germany.
Churchill’s account was far more positive than the reality, according to Maurice Ashley, WSC’s literary assistant. All Flandin actually proposed to Baldwin, Ashley wrote, was to convene the League Council, and perhaps to adopt “sanctions by stages.”

But Churchill does accurately record Stanley Baldwin’s judgment of the mood of Great Britain. The pressure to avoid a confrontation with Germany was immense. At a dinner of ex-servicemen in Leicester, a Churchill ally in the rearmament debate, Leo Amery, gave a fiery speech declaring that Britain’s very existence was threatened. To the amazement of an observer, the former servicemen sided with the Germans, saying in effect, “Why shouldn’t they have their own territory back; if they get it, it’s no concern of ours.”

CHURCHILL’S ACTIONS

Although Hitler’s timing was certainly not based on any concern for Churchill’s reaction, he had nevertheless chosen a moment particularly inconvenient to WSC politically. Churchill recognized the strategic implications of the Rhineland’s occupation, and agreed with Austen Chamberlain, who warned that Austria was next on Hitler’s list. But when he addressed the Commons on 10 March, wrote Robert Rhodes James, Churchill spoke mildly, and was far from bellicose:

He subsequently wrote that “I was careful not to derogate in the slightest degree from my attitude of severe though friendly criticism of Government policy, and I was held to have made a successful speech.” The friendliness is more evident than the severity. Neville Chamberlain recorded that Churchill had “suppressed the attack he had intended and made a constructive and helpful speech.”

In a discussion of Churchill actions in 1994, Sir Robert maintained that Churchill made “no direct reference whatever” in his 10 March speech to the German reoccupation of the Rhineland. This may be true in the technical sense, but Churchill was certainly referring to the Rhineland when he spoke of “the last few days,” and recommended a ministry of supply or defence:

If what we have seen in the last few days is the mood of a partially armed Germany, imagine what the tone will be when these colossal preparations are approaching their zenith…. Let us never accept the theory of inevitable war; neither let us blind our eyes to the remorseless march of events.

Later, at a meeting of the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, Churchill urged a “coordinated plan” under the League of Nations to help France challenge the German action. Sir Samuel Hoare replied for the Government, saying the participants in such a plan were “totally unprepared from a military point of view.” That, one observer noted, “definitely sobered them down.”

On March 12th, five days after Hitler’s coup, Prime Minister Baldwin did two things which disappointed Churchill: He announced, not a new Minister of Defence or Supply, which Churchill had been urging, but a
“Minister for the Coordination of Defence,” something less entirely; and he gave the job to his Attorney General, Sir Thomas Inskip, who knew nothing of the subject.

Inskip might “excite no enthusiasm,” Neville Chamberlain wrote, but at least “he would involve us in no fresh perplexities.” A British general wrote: “Thank God we are preserved from Winston Churchill.”

Baldwin’s appointment had an electrifying effect on Churchill, who, hoping to be called to office, had carefully been avoiding criticizing the government:

Mr. Baldwin certainly had good reason to use the last flickers of his power against one who had exposed his mistakes so severely and so often. Moreover, as a profoundly astute Party manager, thinking in majorities and aiming at a quiet life between elections, he did not wish to have my disturbing aid. He thought no doubt that he had dealt me a politically fatal stroke, and I felt he might well be right.24

On March 13th Churchill, having decided that if he could not have office he would at least have audience, began a series of fortnightly articles on foreign affairs for the Evening Standard.

In the first article, “Britain, Germany and Locarno,” he renewed his call for League of Nations action. The following evening in Birmingham, Churchill sounded conciliatory toward Hitler when he argued that there were peaceful ways to determine if Germany was justified in her action:

The Germans claim that the Treaty of Locarno has been ruptured by the Franco-Soviet pact. That is their case and it is one that should be argued before the World Court at The Hague. The French have expressed themselves willing to submit this point to arbitration and to abide by the result. Germany should be asked to act in the same spirit and to agree. If the German case is good and the World Court pronounces that the Treaty of Locarno has been vitiated by the Franco-Soviet pact, then clearly the German action, although utterly wrong in method, can not be seriously challenged by the League of Nations.25

This is not the familiar voice of defiance which Churchill was soon to become. He was insisting that it was a matter for international action—much as opponents of the 2003 Iraq War insisted that the United Nations should determine what action was necessary. But Churchill did not accept international inertia: If the League of Nations failed, and no other action was taken, he warned, it would cause events to “slide remorselessly downhill towards the pit in which Western civilization might be fatally engulfed.” Opponents of war in 2003 didn’t tend to consider the perils of inaction.

On 26 March in the Commons Churchill warmly applauded Anthony Eden’s “great speech” in which Eden had said that “the appeasement of Europe” was the aim.26 Let us suppose that any one of us were a German and living in Germany, and perhaps entirely discontented with many things that he saw around him, but thinking that here is the Führer, the great Leader of the country, who has raised it so high—and I admire him for that—able to bring home once again a great trophy. One year it is the Saar, another month the right to have conscription, another month to gain from Britain the right to build submarines, another month the Rhineland. What will it be next? Austria, Memel, other territories and disturbed areas, are already in view. If we were Germans, and discontented with the present regime, nevertheless on patriotic grounds there is many a man who would say, “While the Government is bringing home these trophies I cannot indulge my personal, sectional or party feelings against it.”… last August, I said that we must do our duty under the Covenant of the League, but that we should not press France unduly, and that we should not go beyond the point where we could carry France.27

Robert Rhodes James noted in Churchill: A Study in Failure 1900-1939, that Churchill had said, later in this speech, “Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him” (Matthew 5:25). But he didn’t quote the full context. Churchill preceded this by saying—as he very frequently did when it came to negotiating with adversaries—that Germany must be confronted with overwhelming strength and resolution:

I desire to see the collective forces of the world invested with overwhelming power. If you are going to depend on a slight margin, one way or the other, you will have war. But if you get five or ten to one on one side, all bound rigorously by the Covenant [of the League] and the conventions which they own, then you may have an opportunity of a settlement which will heal the wounds of the world. Let us have this blessed union of power and of justice: “Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him.”28

Churchill was still urging international adjudication when his next Evening Standard article “Stop It Now!” was published on April 3rd. The title did not refer to militarily challenging Hitler, but to prevarication and lack of resolve. This was no task for France or Britain, or the Locarno Powers, Churchill declared. It was a task for all: “There may still be time. Let the States and peoples who lie in fear of Germany carry their alarms to the League of Nations at Geneva.”29

Speaking in the Commons three days later, now more critical of the government, Churchill was no less resolved on international action; and he reminded Members that it ought to include Italy, which the British and French had alienated with fruitless sanctions following Mussolini’s invasion of Abyssinia:

The Government ask for a Vote of Confidence. They do not ask it because they have done exceptionally well. They...
will no doubt get the Vote of Confidence, but I hope they
will not make the mistake of thinking that it is a testimo-
nial, or a bouquet, or that it arises from long-pent-up
spontaneous feelings of enthusiasm which can no longer
be held in check....Here you have strong nations banded
together by solemn treaties, armed most powerfully,
whose vital interests are affected; here you have nations
small in numbers who, individually, may be helpless, but
who, organized and united under the authority of the
League, may exert a very great power indeed.30

Churchill, more than Baldwin, was attempting to
see matters from the French viewpoint. The French were
“afraid of the Germans,” he wrote to The Times; yet
France had joined the sanctions against Italy, and the
estrangement of Italy had given Hitler an opportunity:

He struck his blow, and the safety of France suffered an
injury so grievous that we are actually at this moment
making our war plans, although we have virtually no
army to defend France and Belgium if they should be
attacked. In fact Mr. Baldwin’s Government, from the
very highest motives, endorsed by the country at the
General Election, has, without helping Abyssinia at all,
got France into grievous trouble which has to be compen-
sated by the precise engagement of our armed forces.
Surely in the light of these facts, undisputed as I deem
them to be, we might at least judge the French, with
whom our fortunes appear to be so decisively linked, with
a reasonable understanding of their difficulties, which in
the long run may also be our own.31

CONCLUSIONS

Churchill had the ability to look far ahead. As the
anti- appeaser Bob Boothby put it,

The military occupation of the Rhineland separated France
from her allies in Eastern Europe. The occupation of Austria
isolated Czechoslovakia. The betrayal of Czechoslovakia by
the West isolated Poland. The defeat of Poland isolated
France. The defeat of France isolated Britain. If Britain had
been defeated the United States would have been given true
and total isolation for the first time.32

Churchill certainly would have supported, as Henry
Pelling suggested, French military reoccupation, even just
the bridgeheads in places like Cologne.33 But with France
unwilling, he fell back on the League. He never urged uni-
lateral British action, but he did believe and insist that
firmness would produce results.

Churchill was certain that Hitler, at least in those
years, would recoil if confronted with united, over-
whelming force. And there was an example which
suggested he was right. It was Austria’s defeat of an
attempted Nazi coup in July 1934, under its Vice-
Chancellor Ernst Rüdiger Starhemberg: an event ignored
by Anglo-French leaders in the slow, sorry drift to war.
Austria’s resistance caused Hitler to recoil:

Hitler felt he had not only been defeated in the con-
frontation, but personally humiliated by the unexpected
strength of Austrian resistance and the bold move by
Mussolini to support Austria. He immediately made a U-
turn, and stopped all further political interference in
Austria’s internal affairs. Not only was the Nazi propa-
ganda campaign abandoned but the murders and bomb
attacks were abruptly ended.34

Some historians, such as Donald Watt, posit the
notion that the Rhineland caused Churchill to turn to the
Russians: He “fell into the clutches of Ivan Maisky, the
Soviet ambassador in London. In April 1936 we find him
writing to Viscount Cecil [of Chelwood] of the need to
‘organise a European mass, and perhaps a world mass
which would confront them, overawe them, and perhaps
let their peoples loose upon them.”35

John Charmley believes that Churchill knew all
along that the League was toothless: “Espousal of the
League was a flimsy cover for his balance-of-power con-
ception of foreign policy; but where the political left
would excoriate the latter view, they were more likely to
support Churchill if he covered the nakedness of his
Realpolitik with the veil of the League.36

But Churchill’s tune did not suddenly change in
1936. It had evolved from the principles of collective
security he had declared as early as 1933:

I believe that we shall find our greatest safety in co-
operating with the other Powers of Europe, not taking a
leading part but coming in with all the neutral States and
the smaller States of Europe which will gather together
anxiously in the near future at Geneva. We shall make a
great mistake to separate ourselves entirely from them at
this juncture. Whatever way we turn there is risk. But the
least risk and the greatest help will be found in recreating
the Concert of Europe through the League of Nations,
not for the purpose of fiercely quarrelling and haggling
about the details of disarmament, but in an attempt to
address Germany collectively, so that there may be some
redress of the grievances of the German nation and that
that may be effected before this peril of [Nazi Germany’s]
rearmament reaches a point which may endanger the
peace of the world.37

As John Charmley wrote: “The lack of concerted response
from the Versailles Powers revealed what was already
apparent, that where the threat of defeat had brought
unity, the reality of peace had engendered disunion.”38

EPILOGUE

Sir Robert Rhodes James maintained to the end that
Churchill said and did nothing about the Rhineland, even
in the weeks after he had been denied office: “He kept
well clear of the uproar over Abyssinia, being an admirer
of Mussolini, and, although fearful of German rearm-
ament, was writing with admiration about Hitler until late
in 1937. None of this derogates from his essential greatness, but the record of March 1936 is unassailable, and fully justifies my protest at Professor Weidhorn’s inaccurate version in his paper.”

That wasn’t quite the case. Professor Weidhorn never connected the “Stop It Now!” article as meaning Britain must stop the German occupation of the Rhineland. What Churchill wanted to stop was “the hideous drift to war.” Churchill did say much about the Rhineland. But what it amounted to was appealing for action under the League of Nations—which Sir Robert described as “hardly a clarion call.”

Maybe so. But Churchill did say something, and what he said favored action, despite the inertia of the French and Baldwin. The Rhineland did lead to Churchill’s abandonment of hope in the League of Nations, and hastened his calls for secure collective security through “a coalition of the willing” (to use a more recent and perhaps uncomfortable phrase). Manfred Weidhorn and Robert Rhodes James were both right: Churchill did not demand war; but he did want action.

ENDNOTES

10. Ibid., 330.
15. Ibid., 154.
16. Ibid., 154.
18. Ronald Tree, When the Moon Was High (London: Macmillan, 1975), 64.

23. Study in Failure, 262-63.
26. Study in Failure, 262.
28. Arms and the Covenant, 301.
37. Speech of 7 November 1933, in Arms and the Covenant, 102-03.
Winston Churchill died in 1965. The so-called Bush Doctrine was born in 2002 in response to the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001. The most controversial part of the doctrine involved a new approach to the use of force under unprecedented circumstances dealing with events that seem a quantum leap from the issues that Churchill addressed in his lifetime. Nevertheless, the insights Churchill developed in his long career offer a basis, however conjectural, for discussion of the type of judgment and advice he might offer on the nature of the use of force outlined in the Bush Doctrine.

THE BUSH DOCTRINE

A new precept on the use of force evolved in a series of speeches by President Bush in the wake 9/11. The emerging declaratory policy was brought together in the September 2002 National Security Strategy and was then reaffirmed in the next iteration of the document in March 2006.1 A major component of the threat outlined in the 2002 strategy was that “traditional concepts of deterrence will not work against a terrorist enemy whose...so-called soldiers seek martyrdom in death and whose most potent protection is statelessness.” Nor were the concepts neces-

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strophic terrorism, the document proposed adopting “the concept of imminent threat to capabilities and objectives of today’s adversaries,” because America “cannot let our enemies strike first.” The idea was elaborated more graphically that same month by the President’s National Security Adviser, who stated that “we don’t want the smoking gun to become a mushroom cloud.” To forestall such attacks, the administration declared that while “the United States will constantly strive to enlist the support of the international community, we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively.”

Criticism of the new doctrine’s approach to the use of force was not long forthcoming, particularly after the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003. One major issue was the conflation by the administration of preemptive with preventive use of force. The Pentagon defines the preemptive use of force as an “attack initiated on the basis of incontrovertible evidence that an enemy attack is imminent.” Preventive use of force, on the other hand, is “initiated in the belief that military conflict, while not imminent, is inevitable, and that to delay would involve great risk.”

Thus, although the Bush Doctrine presents the argument for acting preemptively, if necessary, it actually moves from imminent threat to the concern with inevitable threat that is the basis for the preventive use of force. The greater the threat, the 2002 National Security Strategy concluded, “the...more compelling the case for taking anticipatory action to defend ourselves, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy’s attack.”

The problem cited by critics of the Bush Doctrine is that the preventive use of force has no legal sanction, since it is responding to a “threat” that is neither certain nor imminent and is based on an assumption of inevitable hostility and the perceived need to strike before the military balance becomes less favorable. By expanding the right of self-defense to include the preventive use of force against threats from terrorists and rogue states before, in the President’s words, they are “fully formed,” the doctrine constitutes a major departure from internationally agreed rules under the United Nations (UN). That organization limits the use of force to self-defense against an armed attack as defined in Article 51 of the UN Charter or to military actions authorized by the UN Security Council under Chapter 7 of the Charter.

In response to the Bush Doctrine, the UN Secretary-General appointed a high-level panel, which concluded that states have the right to defend themselves not only against actual threats, but imminent ones as well. It also determined that the preventive use of force might be appropriate to deal with such latent threats as weapons proliferation and terrorism, but only if authorized by the UN Security Council. As for the concept of a unilateral state decision to exercise the preventive use of force implicit in what the Bush administration labeled anticipatory self-defense, the panel concluded that it would result in international anarchy: “Allowing one to so act is to allow all.”

**THE CHURCHILL EXPERIENCE**

It is reasonable to suppose that Churchill would understand the dilemmas associated with the Bush Doctrine. To begin with, he was familiar with both preemptive and preventive use of force. On 3 July 1940, he ordered a preemptive strike against the Vichy French fleet anchored in Oran, which killed 1299 French sailors.

Vichy was nominally independent, and Churchill lacked proof that Admiral Darlan, the Vichy Minister of War, intended to turn his fleet over to the Nazi regime. But after the fall of the French Premier Paul Reynaud on 17 June, Darlan refused to send the ships to British, American or French colonial harbors. For Churchill the threat was imminent. “The addition of the French Navy to the German and Italian fleets, with the menace of Japan measureless upon the horizon,” he wrote, “confronted Great Britain with mortal dangers.....It was Greek tragedy. But no act was ever more necessary for the life of Britain...”

The “hateful decision” against a former ally took immense courage. It would have been far easier, in Roy Jenkins’ estimation, “to have let sleeping ships lie, and [to have] hoped vaguely for the best.”

As for the preventive use of force, Churchill was aware that British doctrine for centuries had been based on the idea that a single power should not be allowed to dominate the European continent. Thus, the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-14), fought to prevent the union of the French and Spanish kingdoms, was a preventive war. The conflict did not begin with an attack on Britain. But as Churchill chronicled in *Marlborough*, if Britain in alliance with Holland and the Austrian Empire had not declared war and allowed the two countries to unite, the “widest empire in the world” would have added its resources to France’s: “with Spain not only the Indies, South America and the whole of Italy, but the cockpit of Europe—Belgium and Luxembourg.”

Churchill also understood that the preventive use of force required both domestic and international legitimacy. He may not have been aware of the problems that German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck had in the 1880s with his senior General Staff officers, who were clamoring for preventive war against France before that country increased in military might. The German statesman’s reply at the time was that preventive war was like committing suicide to keep from dying.

But by 1911, long after Bismarck had left the scene, Churchill certainly realized that the military strategists were dominating the policy makers in Berlin with the von Schlieffen Plan, that blunt either-or instrument of
preventive war that would bring about the first total conflict of the 20th century. Germany “had long and deliberately committed herself” to the invasion of France, an extremely hazardous preventive use of force, Churchill concluded, “flying in the face of world opinion, openly assuming the role of the aggressor….”

Churchill returned to the preventive use of force in the 1930s after the rise of Adolf Hitler to power. The major lesson for him from this period was that the West had waited too long to stand up to Nazi Germany and that, in fact, appeasement prevented dealing with that threat while it was manageable. As a consequence, World War II was “the unnecessary war,” and the theme of the first volume in his history of that conflict was focused on the preventive use of force:

HOW THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING PEOPLES
THROUGH THEIR UNWISDOM
CARELESSNESS AND GOOD NATURE
ALLOWED THE WICKED
TO REARM

THE RHINELAND CRISIS

Churchill’s theme was based on the traditional British argument that dangers had to be dealt with before they grew larger—an argument to which he returned after Germany occupied the Rhineland (previous article).

For four hundred years the foreign policy of England has been to oppose the strongest, most aggressive, most dominating Power on the Continent….I know of nothing which has occurred to alter or weaken the justice, wisdom, valour, and prudence upon which our ancestors acted. I know of nothing that has happened to human nature which in the slightest degree alters the validity of their conclusions.

The Rhineland crisis was one of a series of Hitler’s “March surprises” throughout the 1930s, consistently in violation of the Versailles Treaty, a sufficient basis, Churchill believed, to provide domestic and international legitimacy for the preventive use of force. British appeasers considered Nazi Germany to be just a revisionist power seeking to overturn the 1919 agreement. Churchill maintained that any faults in that treaty did not render Germany morally equal to the democracies; neither did it provide justification for Hitler’s use of force. This applied even more to the Rhineland crisis, he pointed out, since the German action violated the Locarno agreement as well as the Versailles treaty. Moreover, he also understood that the correlation of forces in March 1936 was quantifiably against Germany, as Hitler was well aware. “We had no army worth mentioning,” the Nazi leader recalled later; “at that time, it would not even have had the fighting strength to maintain itself against the Poles.”

Throughout the remainder of the decade as Europe stumbled toward war, Churchill’s championing of preventive force took on increasingly frustrated tones. In October 1938, he abstained from voting on a motion to approve the results of the recent Munich conference, which he called “a total and unmitigated defeat,” as “silent, mournful, abandoned, broken, Czechoslovakia recedes into the darkness.” Referring to the reign of King Ethelred the Unready, who squandered the strong position Britain had gained under the descendents of King Alfred, the British statesman lamented “all the opportunities of arresting the growth of the Nazi Power which have been thrown away….”

In a similar manner, Churchill’s frustration was almost palpable when he addressed the 31 March 1939 British guarantee to Poland almost a decade later in his memoirs of World War II. “[I]f you will not fight for the right when you can easily win without bloodshed,” he wrote; “if you will not fight when your victory will be sure and not too costly; you may come to the moment when you will have to fight with all the odds against you and only a precarious chance of survival.”
That moment came later, as W.H. Auden noted (from the safety of his New York refuge), Britain was the only actor in a “low dishonest decade”:

In the nightmare of the dark
All the dogs of Europe bark,
And the living nations wait,
Each sequestered in its hate;
Intellectual disgrace
Stares from every human face,
And the seas of pity lie
Locked and frozen in each eye.18

**CHANGE AND CONTINUITY**

Based on his interwar experiences, Churchill would appreciate in this new century how difficult the preventive use of force is politically. The very nature of such use often means that there is ambiguous evidence or intelligence and that, as a consequence, there will be countervailing arguments. This was the case with his failure in the appeasement decade to garner domestic legitimacy by linking German capabilities with intentions until Hitler’s actions could leave no doubt.

Thus, even if he had succeeded, and Britain and France had gone to war with Germany before 1939, much of the public might have believed it to be an unnecessary conflict. “We know,” one analyst has concluded, “given the nature of academics, that had the democracies heeded Churchill’s advice, generations of ungrateful professors would still be writing tomes complaining about preventive war and exonerating Hitler as a legitimate folk nationalist.”19

Moreover, in an increasingly interdependent world threatened by terrorists with a global reach and by weapons of mass destruction (WMD), Churchill, who always was conscious of the link between changes in technology and means of war, would probably agree that the distinction between an imminent threat and a latent one has lost much of its relevance. Certainly the nuclear equation would play an important role in the British statesman’s approach. As he knew, preventive action against nascent nuclear adversaries had been contemplated by governments in the Cold War.

In 1948, while the United States enjoyed a nuclear monopoly, Churchill recommended that the Truman Administration threaten the use of atomic weapons if Stalin refused to withdraw Soviet troops from Berlin and East Germany. His view, the American ambassador to Britain reported, was “that when and if the Soviet [sic] develop the Atomic bomb, war will become a certainty.”20

By 1954, in his last full year as Prime Minister, Churchill had retreated considerably from this position. The Soviets had broken the American nuclear monopoly in 1949, and the 1 March 1954 U.S. detonation of a huge thermonuclear device at Bikini demonstrated that the bombs were becoming infinitely more powerful, even to the extent of obliterating small islands. “You can imagine what my thoughts are about London,” he wrote President Eisenhower.21

By then, preventive first strike attacks were emerging as staples of U.S. and Soviet nuclear doctrine, influencing the development of the strategic triad and counterforce capabilities. The Truman administration had considered, then rejected, the option of preventive war against the Soviets in its 1950 National Security Strategy (NSC 68).

Nevertheless, the massive buildup of U.S. military power during the Korean War was designed to support a policy of forcing the nuclear issue with the Soviets before it was too late—“to lay the basis,” as the author of NSC 68 described it, “for taking increased risks of general war in achieving a satisfactory solution of our relations with the USSR while her stockpile of atomic weapons was still small.”22 Both Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy seriously considered preventive action to keep the Soviet Union and then Communist China from establishing a substantial nuclear capability. At one point early in his administration, as he contemplated the cost for the U.S. to remain “constantly ready” in the Cold War, Eisenhower wondered “whether or not our duty to future generations did not require us to initiate war at the most propitious moment that we could designate.”23

From all these experiences, Churchill would understand why legitimacy for the use of force against terrorism and rogue states is still appropriate in situations that clearly come under Article 51 of the UN Charter for retaliatory action, such as the invasion of Afghanistan; and why legitimacy claims are less credible with preememptive force and weakest when force is perceived as least legitimate; and when force is perceived as most legitimate, there are the greatest questions concerning its efficacy.

Churchill also understood why the procedural legitimacy of the UN was desirable for the use of force, just as it had been with the League of Nations. In the new century, however, he would recognize that the UN system of his era is not well-equipped to deal with the new threats.

There are two principles that evolved on his watch as the basis for the use of force in the UN Charter. The first was that states are sovereign and equal; the second is that states should not interfere in the internal affairs of other states. But new actors ranging from terrorists and nuclear technology traffickers to international criminal cartels now have nothing to do with sovereignty—except to erode that legal doctrine. Many failed or failing states are simply not strong enough to resist such inroads, or to control actions within their own borders. “The events of September 11, 2001,” the President stated, “taught us that weak states… compose as great a danger to our national interests as strong states.”24
THE WAY AHEAD

Churchill might begin a critique of the Bush Doctrine by acknowledging that the use of force is part of a panoply of options in the National Security Strategy ranging from non-proliferation to global economic growth. But given his experiences, it is not far-fetched to conjecture that he would question a fundamental assumption of the doctrine that deterrence would not work against terrorist or rogue states.

As a young officer on India’s northwest frontier with Afghanistan, and in the Sudan, Churchill was very much aware that deterrence was an integral part of what the British War Office termed “small wars” on the periphery of the Empire. “For it might be well also to remember,” Churchill reminded the readers of The Story of the Malakand Field Force, “that the great drama of frontier war is played before a vast, silent but attentive audience, who fill a theater that reaches from Peshawar to Colombo and from Karachi to Rangoon.”

However, based on his experiences in the Cold War, Churchill would acknowledge how problematic deterrence is as a tool in preventing a nation from acquiring nuclear capability. Moreover, he would likely admit that the concept of deterrence has grown more complex in dealing with catastrophic nuclear terrorism by groups or individuals outside the bounds of normal means-ends instrumental rationality. But he would also understand, from dealing with developments at the dawn of the atomic age, that it is virtually impossible for individuals or groups to create nuclear material, since producing plutonium or enriching uranium requires a large and scientifically knowledgeable labor force as well as significant industrial resources. Consequently, states or sub-state military or scientific organizations will have to be involved tacitly or overtly in providing nuclear material to terrorist groups.

This would likely mean for Churchill that even if the West is unable to deter terrorists, there are incentives that can be created for these other actors to prevent terrorist acquisition of nuclear materials. Moreover, improvements in nuclear forensics, by enhancing the ability to give a home address for any nuclear device, have the potential to improve the basis for deterrence strategies against any rogue states that might assist terrorists for a nuclear attack.

Leaders of such states can often seem irrational in their dealings with other international actors. But as Churchill understood from the British experience with Hitler, such displays in many cases are nothing more than rational combinations of fanaticism and calculation. The Nazi leader, for example, often played up his reputation as a Teppichfresser, a “rug chewer,” given to ungovernable rages. At no time was this calculated irrationality better illustrated than on 23 August 1939, when the British ambassador presented him a note from Prime Minister Chamberlain indicating Britain’s readiness to honor its Polish guarantees, while holding out hope for negotiation.

Hitler responded by working himself into a frenzy, launching a violent tirade against the British. “To all appearance,” the historian Allan Bullock noted, “Hitler was a man whom anger had drawn beyond the reach of rational agreement.” And yet, as one German official recorded that day: “Hardly had the door shut behind the Ambassador than Hitler slapped himself on the thigh, laughed and said: ‘Chamberlain won’t survive that conversation; his Cabinet will fall this evening.’”

So it is reasonable to suppose that Churchill would encourage efforts to improve deterrence of rogue states. He would undoubtedly agree that Bush was correct to identify a catastrophic nuclear 9/11 as the most dangerous threat to U.S. national security, and that the doctrine pro-
vides a useful service as a catalyst for reexamining the use of force against this threat. But he would also agree with critics that the Bush National Security Strategy, in responding to this threat, has unnecessarily confused the issue by conflating preemptive and preventive use of force in its brief presentation of the subject.

Equally, Churchill would likely understand why some object to the tone of unilateralism in the Bush Doctrine, with its implicit motivation being the difficulty in getting consensus for the use of force against inevitable threats. He would acknowledge the doctrine’s focus on strengthening alliances and developing agendas for cooperative action. But he would also question the extreme articulation in the strategy document concerning the legitimacy of unilateral action—an unnecessary reference that could detract from the role of government in recruiting allies, a vital mission for him in the two total wars of the 20th century.

In any event, he might point out that unilateralism is not the only alternative to the UN Security Council, even while cautioning that in many cases there is a false dichotomy between multilateral paralysis and unilateral U.S. action when it comes to the use of force. He, of course, would recognize the primacy of national interests in ultimately determining America’s approach to the use of force.

The UN, like the League of Nations, had always been a useful adjunct for Churchill, but not a substitute for traditional realist balance-of-power diplomacy. From this perspective in the wake of World War II, he had acknowledged America’s hegemony in the West, a dominance muted deliberately by the U.S. involvement in multinational endeavors ranging from the Bretton Woods agreement to the NATO treaty.

Based on this experience, he might recommend that the U.S. create once again such a consensual American hegemony. The first step in this effort could be simply to take the innovative but thin and confusingly presented argument for force employment in the Bush Doctrine, and, with appropriate elaboration and discussion, begin to build agreed standards for the preventive use of power.

Once that was accomplished, the next step could be to establish these standards in an effective institution, whether regional in nature or a coalition of democratic states. In keeping with this approach, he might emphasize that the U.S. cultivate allies and maintain large coalitions in order to secure desired behavior in other actors, to minimize cost, and to use their help to manage a rapidly changing, complex and contentious international environment. The U.S. may be in “a position of unparalleled military strength,” as President Bush noted in the 2002 National Security Strategy; but as Churchill understood from British history, even a hyperpower risks military overextension without allies.27

CONCLUSIONS

Churchill would regret, I think, that the Iraq war, now in its sixth year, has raised doubts not only in U.S. claims to legitimacy in its use of force, but the efficacy of such efforts against terrorism. From this perspective, he would hope that the struggle in Iraq would not dampen discussion and movement on the new approaches to the use of force raised by the Bush Doctrine in response to the privatization of war in a rapidly changing globe. In terms of future U.S. presidents, internal conditions of states are as likely as cross-border aggression to threaten international peace and stability, whether it is human rights violations and attendant refugee problems or failed states that become tempting targets for terrorists.

At the same time, WMD proliferation in a growing number of states increases the possibility that the norms against the use of such weapons will be eroded. The chances of this occurring rise dramatically as authoritarian or unstable governments acquire WMD capability. This, in turn, increases the chances that WMD will be used or that such weapons will find their way into the hands of terrorists.

Given these threats, Churchill would urge redoubled efforts to overcome the legitimacy-efficacy paradox in the use of force by working to establish norms for preventive force among the major powers, if not the international community. He might also remind American leaders that terrorism does not achieve its goals through its acts, but through the response to its acts. As a consequence, while it is prudent to prepare for threats, it is also prudent to avoid hesitation.

Certainly as Churchill well understood, before leaders embark on war, it is incumbent on them to consider costs, risks and unintended consequences in relation to the imminence of the threat if they are to acquire the moral basis of legitimacy for their action. “Few facts are so encouraging to the student of human development,” Churchill observed in his account of the 1898 “small war” in the Sudan, “as the desire, which most men and all communities manifest at all times, to associate with their actions at least the appearance of moral right.”28

Equally important, as Churchill learned from the Anglo-Boer War in 1899, improvements in communication and transportation meant a growing linkage between domestic and international legitimacy for Britain’s recourse to and conduct of war. As the Boer conflict dragged on and British forces initiated increasingly harsh measures in the evolving guerrilla war waged by the Boers, international disapproval was matched by growing criticism on the part of the British public directed not only at the conduct of the war, but the motivation for it as well. Looking back on these developments in his 1930 autobiography, Churchill issued a warning that still resonates today in a new era of “small wars”: 28

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Let us learn our lessons. Never, never, never believe any war will be smooth and easy, or that anyone who embarks on that strange voyage can measure the tides and hurricanes he will encounter. The Statesman who yields to war fever must realize that once the signal is given, he is no longer the master of policy but the slave of unforeseeable and uncontrollable events. Antiquated War Offices, weak, incompetent or arrogant Commanders, untrustworthy allies, hostile neutrals, malignant Fortune, ugly surprises, awful miscalculations—all take their seat at the Council Board on the morrow of a declaration of war. 29

ENDNOTES
6. NSS 2002, p. 15. The National Military Strategy continued the conflation of the two terms by referring (12) to “preventive missions” while stating (2) that the “potentially catastrophic impact of an attack against the United States, its allies and its interests may necessitate actions in self-defense to preempt adversaries before they can attack.” Joint Chiefs of Staff, National Military Strategy of the United States of America (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2004). The current NSS uses the same preventive use of force language while stating that the “place of preemption in our national security strategy remains the same.” NSS 2006, 23, 18.
7. NSS 2002, ii.
14. Ibid., 207-08.
24. NSS 2002, ii. See also Steinberg, 20-21 and Daalder, 9-10.
Admiring Shakespeare

“The Bible and Shakespeare stand alone on the highest platform.” —WSC, 2 November 1949

Mike Robinson asked for Churchill’s thoughts on Shakespeare, particularly any comment on Laurence Olivier’s performances.

Darrell Holley’s Churchill’s Literary Allusions (1987) says there “is no English author whom Churchill alludes to as often as William Shakespeare. Both by formal quotations, some quite lengthy, and by well-known phrases almost hidden in his text, Churchill makes allusion to many of Shakespeare’s plays.

“Somewhat surprisingly, he makes no reference to any of the sonnets. It is certainly not surprising, however, that Churchill should allude often to the histories and tragedies, King John, Richard III, and Hamlet being referred to most.

“Churchill uses Shakespeare in various capacities: as illustrations in his history of England, as embellishments in his other historical works, and as support in speeches to Parliament. In various ways he borrows the artist’s words to ornament his own ideas.”

Holley includes forty-six Shakespeare references and quotes deployed by Churchill in books and speeches. Here are some examples:

“To defend them or not to defend them—that was the question.” (Hamlet, in Lord Randolph Churchill).

“Age cannot wither her nor custom stale / Her infinite variety...” (Antony and Cleopatra, in Thoughts and Adventures).

“To commit the Navy irrevocably to oil was indeed ‘to take arms against a sea of troubles’” (Hamlet, in The World Crisis).

“Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war” (Julius Caesar, in The Story of the Malakand Field Force).

“Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more / Or close the wall up with our English dead” (Henry V, in A History of the English-Speaking Peoples).

“...they might easily be induced to throw in their lot with us and ‘make assurance double sure’” (Macbeth, in Blood Sweat and Tears / Into Battle).

“For God’s sake, let us sit upon the ground / And tell sad stories of the death of Kings” (Richard II, in The Gathering Storm).

Darrell Holley’s book is a treasure trove, but he does not claim to be definitive. There are many more Shakespeare quotes in Churchill’s canon.

**CHURCHILL AND OLIVIER**

Two of Martin Gilbert’s volumes in the Official Biography tell us that in October 1944 WSC saw Olivier in Richard III; fourteen months later in December 1945 he saw Olivier as Mr. Justice Shadow in Henry IV. Also according to Gilbert, in November, 1944 “Churchill, his wife, and their daughter Sarah, Marrian Holmes, Elizabeth Layton [secretaries], and others of the Chequers entourage, saw Henry V in Technicolor. ‘The PM went into ecstasies about it,’ Colville noted.”

In 1951 Lord and Lady Olivier (Vivien Leigh) stayed at Chartwell. Olivier had played Nelson and Vivien Leigh had played Emma Hamilton in the 1941 Alexander Korda movie Lady Hamilton (That Hamilton Woman in America). In 1955 Olivier received the supreme honour when Churchill put him up for membership in the Other Club.

In his Confessions of an Actor, Laurence Olivier recalled a droll experience at a Bernard Shaw play:

“The first time we realized that he was honouring us was at a performance of Caesar and Cleopatra. In the interval, I was hovering about in my dressing-room, wondering what the great man was thinking of us, when my door opened and that immortal head with the wonderful blue eyes came round it. I was too much taken aback to say anything, but he said at once, ‘Oh, I’m so sorry, I was looking for a corner.’ Realizing his need, I took him back through the outer office, and indicated to him exactly where to go and how to get himself down the stairs again, where there would be someone waiting to take him back through the pass-door to his seat. He always allowed himself the extravagance of buying three seats, one for himself, one for his much loved daughter Mary, and one for his hat and coat; I thought this one of the most sensible extravagances I had ever heard of. A little later Mary told me that, returning to his seat and sitting himself next to her, he had said, ‘I was looking for a lulo, and who d’you think I ran into? Juloo.’”


The Director of London’s Old Vic Theatre had advised Burton before a performance of Hamlet, “Do be good tonight because the Old Man’s out there in the front row.” In Britain, Burton said, “the Old Man is only one person, and that’s Churchill. I panicked. But I went onstage and started to play Hamlet. I heard a dull rumble from the front row of the stalls. It was Churchill speaking the lines with me, and I could not shake him off. I tried going fast; I tried going slow; we did cuts. Every time there was a cut, an explosion occurred. He knew the play absolutely backward; he knows perhaps a dozen Shakespeare plays intimately. Generally you can’t keep him for more than one act. When the first curtain came down I looked through the spyhole. He got up from his seat and I thought: That’s it; we’ve lost him. But a few minutes later he appeared in my dressing room, saying, ‘My Lord Hamlet, may I use your lavatory?’ And he did.”

—PhC, JRL, RML
Red Herrings: Famous Words Churchill Never Coined

MICHAEL RICHARDS

The Oxford English Dictionary defined “red herring” as a metaphor to draw pursuers off a track...the trailing or dragging of a dead Cat or Fox (and in case of necessity a Red-Herring) three or four miles...and then laying the Dogs on the scent....To attempt to divert attention from the real question...."

Finest Hour answers hundreds of emails to The Churchill Centre asking us to verify quotations, a lot of which turn out to be red herrings. Many remarks which Churchill used originated with others (e.g., “Democracy is the worst system, except for all the other systems”). He deployed his favorites frequently, but not always with attribution, or even quote marks, because he assumed his listeners would recognise them instantly. In his time, sadly, people were simply better read than they are today.

Here are some of the most popular, referenced in Churchill by Himself, the new book of quotations by the editor (reviewed on page 49).

• “I am a man of simple tastes—I am quite easily satisfied with the best of everything.”

This remark is frequently said to have been made to the manager of the Plaza Hotel in New York City on Churchill’s 1929 or 1931 visit. Sir John Colville, WSC’s longtime private secretary, credits it to Churchill’s close friend F.E. Smith, Lord Birkenhead: “Winston is easily satisfied with the best.” But since publication of Churchill by Himself (page 49), Robert Pilpel has informed us that the originator was George Bernard Shaw. In Shaw’s play Major Barbara (1905), Lady Britomart says (act 1, scene 1): “I know your quiet, simple, refined, poetic people like Adolphus—quite content with the best of everything!”

Of course Churchill may have learned the phrase from Shaw or Smith, and adapted it later.

• “I like pigs. Dogs look up to us. Cats look down on us. Pigs treat us as equals.”

Sir Anthony Montague Browne, WSC’s private secretary, 1952-65, quotes the more likely version: “Dogs look up to you, cats look down on you. Give me a pig! He looks you in the eye and treats you as an equal.” Several other variations exist, Sir Anthony’s is the most authentic. A version posted at Chartwell, which doesn’t sound like WSC’s style, reads: “...Cats look down on human beings, dogs look up to them, but pigs just treat us as human beings.”

• “Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm.”

No attribution. A number of sources credit this to Abraham Lincoln, but without attribution. A correct substitute: “Success always demands a greater effort.” (WSC to Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies, 13 December 1940, published in Their Finest Hour, 1949.)

• “Courage is the first of human qualities because it is the quality which guarantees all others.”

Correctly: “Courage is the first of human qualities because, as has been said, it is the quality...” etc. (“Alfonso the Unlucky,” Strand Magazine, July 1931; reprinted in Great Contemporaries, 1937. “As has been said” likely refers to Samuel Johnson’s “Sir, you know courage is reckoned the greatest of all virtues; because, unless a man has that virtue, he has no security for preserving any other.”

• “We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give.”

Reiterated in many sources including a 2005 TV ad by Lockheed Martin. An old saw put in Churchill’s mouth.

• “Play the game for more than you can afford to lose...only then will you learn the game.”

No attribution found. A correct substitute: “It is a fine game to play the game of politics and it is well worth a good hand before really plunging.” (WSC to his mother, Aldershot, 16 August 1895.)

• “You have enemies? Good. That means you’ve stood up for something, sometime in your life.”

No attribution. Substitute: “The spectacle of a number of middle-aged gentlemen who are my political opponents being in a state of uproar and fury is really quite exhilarating to me.” (House of Commons, 21 May 1952.)
• “There is no such thing as a good tax.”
  No attribution. Substitute: “Taxes are an evil—a necessary evil, but still an evil, and the fewer we have of them the better.” (House of Commons, 12 February 1906.)

• “Continuous effort is the key to unlocking our potential.”
  No attribution found. Here is a substitute, not original to Churchill (it’s from Longfellow, “The Ladder of St Augustine,” stanza 10); but frequently repeated both by WSC and his son Randolph:
  The heights by great men reached and kept
  Were not achieved by sudden flight,
  But they, while their companions slept,
  Were toiling upward in the night.

• “I drink a great deal. I sleep a little, and I smoke cigar after cigar. That is why I am in two-hundred-percent form.”
  Close but, er, no cigar. The correct version, when General Montgomery declared, “I neither drink nor smoke and I am 100 percent fit,” is: “I drink and smoke and I am 200 percent fit.”
  (Memoirs of Field Marshal Montgomery, 1958; FH 86.)

• “An empty car drew up and Clement Attlee got out”….“He is a sheep in sheep’s clothing!”
  Allegedly said but unverified. According to Ralph Keyes, editor of The Quote Verifier (2006), wrote: “British quote maven Nigel Rees thought the comment might have originated with newspaper columnist J.B. Morton [1893-1979] in the 1930s.”

• “Smoking cigars is like falling in love; first you are attracted to its shape; you stay for its flavour; and you must always remember never, never let the flame go out.”
  Published without attribution in The American Spectator, July–August 2005. Editor R. Emmett Tyrrell questioned the attributor, who said it was reported by Randolph Churchill in a 1953 conversation, but “of course Randolph was drunk at the time.” A little dubious.

• “Well, dinner would have been splendid if the wine had been as cold as the soup, the beef as rare as the service, the brandy as old as the fish, and the maid as willing as the Duchess.”
  No attribution. Along the lines of the quote above, Churchill did not make smutty gags.

• “The heaviest cross I have to bear is the Cross of Lorraine.”
  This reference to de Gaulle was actually by General Spears, WSC’s military representative to France, 1939–40.

• Birth: “Although present on that occasion I have no clear recollection of the events leading up to it.”
  Remarkably, this famous and oft-quoted expression doesn’t track. It is not among Churchill’s published words and appears only in The Last Lion by William Manchester, whose notes do not lead the reader to its origin.

• “The best argument against Democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter.”
  No attribution. Though he sometimes despairs of democracy’s slowness to act for its preservation, Churchill had a more positive attitude towards the average voter.

• “I am going to make a long speech today; I haven’t had time to prepare a short one.”
  If he ever said it, he was quoting Blaise Pascal in 1656.

• “A fully equipped duke costs as much to keep as two dreadnoughts; and dukes are just as great a terror and they last longer.”
  Lovely, but it was Lloyd George, not Churchill.

• “Jaw, jaw is better than war, war.”
  Credit Harold Macmillan, not Churchill, who said, “Meeting jaw to jaw is better than war.”

• “Don’t talk to me about naval tradition. It’s nothing but rum, buggery [sometimes ‘ sodomy’] and the lash.”
  Specifically denied by WSC. An old naval saw.

• “This is the kind of arrant pedantry up with which I will not put.”
  On ending sentences with prepositions. Fred Shapiro (Yale Book of Quotations) tracks it to the Strand Magazine, 1942, but no Churchill connection has been tracked.

• “You are my fifth favourite actor. The first four are the Marx Brothers.”

• “If you’re going through hell, keep going.”

• “The young sow wild oats, the old grow sage.”

• “If a man is not liberal in youth he has no heart.
  If he is not conservative when older he has no brain.”

• “However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results.”
  No attribution is found for any of the above. Readers, please contact us if you can provide reliable sources.

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Coventry: What Really Happened

MARTIN GILBERT

IT IS ENDLESSLY REPEATED THAT CHURCHILL LET COVENTRY BE DESTROYED TO PROTECT SECRET INTELLIGENCE. FH ASKED HIS BIOGRAPHER FOR HIS FINAL CONCLUSIONS.

On the night of 14 November 1940, three hundred German bombers dropped 500 tons of explosives, 33,000 incendiary bombs and dozens of parachute mines on the industrial city of Coventry. During the raid, 507 civilians were killed and 420 were seriously injured.¹

A recent play at the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry, One Night In November, repeated the frequently made claim that Winston Churchill knew of the attack several days in advance, but that he held back the information to protect the most important secret of the war: the breaking of the German Enigma code at Bletchley Park. In the words of the press publicity: “...the play examines the idea that Winston Churchill had advance warning of the attack. Was Coventry sacrificed for the greater good? Or to provoke America into the war?”²

The truth about the bombing of Coventry is very different.

On 12 November 1940, Enigma decrypts made it clear that a major German bombing raid was imminent. Its code name, Moonlight Sonata, had been read in the decrypts. But the decrypts gave no clue as to the destination of the German bombers.

The Air Intelligence report that the Prime Minister was given on 12 November gave, on the basis of the latest intelligence, five possible targets: Central London, Greater London, the Thames Valley, or the Kent or Essex coasts.³

A German pilot who had been shot down on 9 November had, under interrogation, suggested that two cities—Coventry and Birmingham—would both be attacked in a “colossal raid” between 15 and 20 November (after the actual raid, which was on the 14th.) The senior Air Intelligence Liaison officer at Bletchley, Squadron Leader Humphreys, noted, in contrast to this, that there was “pretty definite information that the attack is to be against London and the Home Counties.” The Intelligence analysts at Bletchley considered the German pilot’s information “doubtful,” as it was earlier than the information available to Squadron Leader Humphreys.⁴

Churchill was sent a summary of these reports on the morning of 14 November; he read them just after midday, on his return from Neville Chamberlain’s funeral. The summary informed him that whatever the target, the usual counter-measures had been prepared since early that morning, and would be activated as soon as the precise target was known.

In the Air Ministry summary, Churchill read that the target area would be “probably in the vicinity of London.”

Sir Martin Gilbert CBE has been Sir Winston Churchill’s official biographer since 1968. Although Finest Hour has covered this subject before (see for example http://xrl.us/bjaep), we asked Sir Martin for his assessment based on his most recent research.
“Churchill went to the underground Central War Rooms...but became so impatient for the impending attack that he spent the night on the Air Ministry roof, waiting for it to begin. Over London, it never did.”

If, however, “further information were to indicate Coventry, Birmingham or elsewhere,” it was hoped that the standard “Cold Water” instructions for counter-measures could be got out in time. These were instructions to rush fire engines and civil defence personnel to the area indicated from all the surrounding towns in a wide arc.

That afternoon, Churchill prepared to leave Downing Street by car to spend the weekend at Ditchley Park, northwest of Oxford. As his car was about to leave, John Martin, his Principal Private Secretary, handed him a top-secret message in a locked box. As the car reached the Albert Memorial, Churchill read the message. It was the latest intelligence from Brigadier Menzies—“C”—head of the Secret Intelligence Services. Churchill immediately told his driver to return to Downing Street, explaining to Martin that he was not going to spend the night peacefully in the country while the capital was “under heavy attack.”

That there would be an attack was known, Churchill’s Junior Private Secretary Jock Colville noted in his diary that night, “from the contents of these mysterious buff boxes, which the PM alone opens, sent every day by Brigadier Menzies.” Colville did not know the contents; all he knew was that, of that particular night’s raid, “its exact destination the Air Ministry say they find it difficult to determine.”

Early that evening Churchill waited at Downing Street for the expected attack on London, sending the two duty private secretaries that evening, John Colville and John Peck, to the underground shelter at the disused Down Street underground railway station on the Piccadilly Line, telling them: “You are too young to die.” He also gave instructions for the “Garden Room Girls”—the typists at 10 Downing Street—to be sent home.

Churchill went to the underground Central War Rooms (now known as the Cabinet War Rooms), to await the Moonlight Sonata, but became so impatient for the impending attack that he spent the night on the Air Ministry roof, waiting for it to begin. Over London, it never did.

The moment that German radio beams made it clear that Coventry was the target, the Air Ministry ordered eight British bombers to bomb the aerodromes—south of Cherbourg—from which the attackers were expected to take off. A continuous fighter patrol was maintained over Coventry itself, and the “Cold Water” defence preparations were activated. These brought fire engines and civil defence personnel into Coventry from a wide area around.

The defences of Coventry had recently been strengthened. Following a German air raid on 2 November—the sixteenth on Coventry in a month—Ernest Bevin, the Minister of Labour responsible for factory production, had complained to Churchill about the poor state of the city’s protection. In response, Churchill had given instructions on 7 November to strengthen Coventry’s anti-aircraft defences. These instructions had been carried out. Around Coventry on the night of 14 November were five times as many anti-aircraft guns per head of the population as there were around London, and one hundred British fighters were airborne. But that could not save the city from the firestorm created by the incendiary bombs.

On November 12th, Enigma had revealed a raid in prospect, but not the target. At the moment on November 14th when the German radio directional beams revealed the target, all possible counter measures had been taken without delay.

ENDNOTES

1. A larger number of civilians—545—had been killed in the Coventry-Birmingham area in the previous month. The number of dead in London for that same month was 5090. (Premier papers, 3/108, folios 39-43).


4. A1 1(W). Memorandum to Director of Air Intelligence, 12 November 1940: Air Ministry papers, 2/5238.

5/ Air Staff summary, 14 November 1940: Air Ministry papers, 2/5238.


7. John Colville diary, 14 November 1940.

8. Ibid.


10. John Colville diary, 14 November 1940.


Sir Winston Churchill has well-known connections with many British institutions, but perhaps one that has received little attention has been his association with Lloyd’s of London, the 300-year-old insurance market situated in Leadenhall Street in the City of London. By coincidence, this association indirectly began in the year of his birth, 1874, for it was at this time that Clementine Hozier’s father, Colonel Sir Henry Hozier, became Secretary of Lloyd’s, a post he held with distinction until 1906. But it was Churchill’s appointment as First Lord of the Admiralty in 1911 that brought him into a clear awareness of Lloyd’s and its historical relationship with the Royal Navy.

Towards the end of the 17th Century, Edward Lloyd established one of the then many fashionable coffee houses close to the pool of London. The proximity to the River Thames, to the busy London docks, and to the emerging financial centre of the City of London, attracted ship captains and ship owners, merchants and traders; as a consequence, a market for insurance was established. Edward Lloyd introduced various facilities for the developing underwriters and traders, including his own newspaper, Lloyd’s News, reporting mainly on shipping movements. This became Lloyd’s List, established in 1734 and considered to be Britain’s oldest national newspaper.

By the early 1900s the British Empire dominated world trade and Britain had the biggest shipbuilding industry and largest merchant fleet. Unlike its competi-

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This piece, originally published in Finest Hour 67 in 1990, was to have run in our previous, 40th Anniversary number—but when we received the Cooper portrait in radiant color we had never seen before, we knew it must be our next cover. David Boler, a member of the Churchill Centre Board of Trustees, has an extensive background and association with Lloyd’s of London, by whose courtesy their Egerton Cooper portrait of Sir Winston Churchill is published here.

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Another portrait of Sir Winston Churchill has been painted: and this is one that he likes. It has been presented to Lloyd’s by the Lloyd’s Insurance Brokers’ Association. Mr. Egerton Cooper painted the portrait, and we have it on his authority that Churchill approves. “Sir Winston said he liked the picture very much,” says Mr. Cooper. At present the portrait is on view to members of Lloyd’s in the library there. It is leaning against a wall. When their new building is completed a special place will be prepared to hang it. Sir Winston is depicted sitting beneath an oak tree at Chartwell, his home in Kent. Mr. Cooper began it six years ago. He finished the head at the time; the rest of the picture has been filled in later. Churchill has a cigar in his left hand. Mr. Cooper made sketches and drawings from life at Chartwell, then painted the portrait in his Chelsea studio. It is a little over five feet tall and four feet wide. Cooper—“I am well over 60”—has painted many famous men. This is his third portrait of Churchill: one hangs in the Carlton Club, one in the Junior Carlton. Mr. Cooper painted King George VI twice. —Lloyd’s List, 1954
tors, Lloyd’s of London had always provided insurance cover against war risks, sorely tested by the U-boat perils in both world wars.

The first visit to Lloyd’s by Churchill that I can trace occurred in 1936, although it is more than possible that he visited earlier. According to Lloyd’s List he was entertained at luncheon by the Chairman, Mr. Neville Dixey, and afterwards made a tour of the Underwriting Room, the Library and the Nelson Collection: “The many documents and other objects illustrating the career of the great sea commander naturally attracted the close attention of one who filled the office of First Lord of the Admiralty during perhaps the most critical period of our naval history.”

Members of Lloyd’s happy to applaud his World War I leadership soon had another reason to thank Churchill: the victory of the Allied Navies in the Battle of the Atlantic during World War II. The cost of defeat would have been ruin—and the death of Lloyd’s. Perhaps it was also for this reason (and her relationship to Col. Hozier) that the Lloyd’s community responded so generously to Clementine Churchill’s “Aid to Russia” fund appeal during the war, contributing over £18,000 in 1940s money.

In 1944 Lloyd’s showed its gratitude by electing Churchill an Honorary Member of their Society. He was only the fifth person unconnected with Lloyd’s so honoured. He was in illustrious company, his predecessors being Marconi, his old friend Admiral Beatty, Lord Haig and Admiral Sturdee.

In 1954, several paintings were commissioned to commemorate Churchill’s 80th birthday. It is good fortune that Lloyd’s were responsible for sponsoring one that he actually liked. Unlike the infamous Parliamentary commission by Graham Sutherland, this painting survives and is proudly hung in the New Lloyd’s Building. For many years it dominated the famous “Captains Room.” The artist, Alfred Egerton Cooper, depicts Sir Winston sitting under an oak tree at Chartwell. It is the inspiration behind this article.

Lloyd’s List has its own piece of history to add to this story. As is well known, there was a London newspaper strike at the time Sir Winston announced his retirement as Prime Minister and, consequently, none of the Fleet Street papers carried this story on the morning of 6 April 1955. (The strike began on March 25th and did not end until April 21st.) However, and in company with the Manchester Guardian, Lloyd’s List appeared daily in spite of the strike and alone among London newspapers carried the momentous news on the morning of Wednesday, 6 April 1955.

The day following Sir Winston’s death, on Monday, 25 January 1965, Lloyd’s rang the famous Lutine Bell as a mark of respect for their illustrious Honorary Member. This bell, salvaged from a French sailing frigate, La Lutine, has traditionally been rung once for bad news, and twice for good. In the years following the war, it had only been rung on ceremonious occasions—except for the deaths of Sir Winston Churchill and the man who conferred on him honorary citizenship of the United States of America—President John F. Kennedy.
Sheriffs and Constables: Churchill’s and Roosevelt’s Postwar World

CHURCHILL FREQUENTLY DISMISSED PROPOSALS FOR POSTWAR PLANNING. HIS THOUGHT ON SUCH MATTERS HAS TO BE CONSTRUCTED FROM SNIPPETS OF SPEECHES AND CONVERSATIONS. ROOSEVELT, THOUGH RENOWNED FOR MASKING HIS THOUGHTS, SPOKE CLEARLY AND OFTEN ABOUT PLANNING. JUST HOW CLOSE HE AND CHURCHILL CAME IN THEIR THINKING ABOUT THE POSTWAR ORDER IS ILLUSTRATED BY A PHRASE FROM WSC’s 1946 FULTON SPEECH: “COURTS AND MAGISTRATES MAY BE SET UP BUT THEY CANNOT FUNCTION WITHOUT SHERIFFS AND CONSTABLES.”

WARREN F. KIMBALL

Illingworth in the Daily Mail, 28 January 1942, following WSC’s visit to FDR (labels slightly modified by Barbara Langworth).

This is a drastically, even uncomfortably, abbreviated version of my two papers at Hyde Park, New York: a Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute conference on FDR’s postwar legacy in 2005; and a FERI/Churchill Centre conference on the joint legacy of FDR and Churchill in 2007. All too often I can only allude to legacies and cannot discuss them. For more discussion, at least on one side of the ledger, see my “The Sheriffs: FDR’s Postwar World” in David Woolner, David Reynolds, and Warren F. Kimball, eds., FDR’s World: War, Peace, and Legacies (New York: Palgrave, 2008). My original title was “the Sheriff and the Gunslinger,” but I had second thoughts. The cartoon above notwithstanding, Churchill was not a “gunslinger,” whatever his popular reputation. WFK.
William Henry Chamberlain, a biting and bitter critic of Franklin Roosevelt’s foreign policies, sarcastically warned in 1940 that “I am anticipating the day when possession of Tibet and Afghanistan will be represented as vitally necessary to the security of Kansas and Nebraska.” “Nothing short of eerie,” observed one historian.²

Whatever those eerie echoes in today’s world, FDR would have been appalled by the very concept. His vision of the postwar world order specifically excluded using military power for political goals, and envisaged a regional approach that would limit the direct policing and persuading role of the United States to the western hemisphere. But Winston Churchill, the dedicated steward of Britain’s international role (and that is a great deal larger and more expansive than merely “empire”), never questioned that Tibet and Afghanistan mattered.

FDR’s and Churchill’s legacies? All these legacies are interconnected. The Second World War created a tabula rasa of sorts that allowed Churchill and Roosevelt to distill the mix of what they inherited and what they foresaw into a world order or system that has lasted for sixty years—though not everything came out as they intended.

What were and are Roosevelt’s legacies for the world? There are two broad ones, although the subcategories make it a bit more complex.

1. “Regionalized cooperative internationalism” or globalism, which includes the “scrapping” of so-called isolationism (a.k.a. unilateralism), the dominant role of the great powers (the four-or-so policemen), the establishment of an international organization to facilitate great power collaboration, the everlasting American crusade for economic “liberalism,” the creation of an atmosphere into which “containment” could comfortably fit, and raising the issue of decolonization—although that fits also in the second great legacy, which is:

2. Americanism: shorthand for everything besides Franklin Roosevelt’s geopolitical thinking: the internationalization of the New Deal, Roosevelt’s conviction that leadership and persuasion were the means to create peaceful relationships, and his calm and unshakable belief in the American democratic tradition combined with the awareness that the results were far from perfect (as Eleanor Roosevelt constantly reminded him).

There are a number of mythical or non-legacies that serve as defining antonyms for Roosevelt’s shadow:

- Roosevelt was a believer in and practitioner of realpolitik, or, contradictorily, Roosevelt made Wilsonianism the American foreign policy tradition.
- Roosevelt sought to establish the kind of international organization that emerged at the end of the Second World War—the United Nations Organization.
- Roosevelt caused the precipitate decolonization of European empires.
- Roosevelt became a “cold warrior” before his death.

These statements are myths, or exaggerations, or distortions.

Winston Churchill’s legacies often paralleled FDR’s, but there were distinct and fundamental points of departure. Two broad categories embrace Churchill’s patrimony. One is globalism, or universal internationalism. The other is the “Anglo-American special relationship,” a phrase that needs a good deal of decoding.

1. “Regionalized cooperative internationalism” is not a phrase that fits comfortably around Sir Winston. He was indeed an internationalist, and preferred a regional structure, especially in continental Europe, where the effect of British influence depended on persuasion and cooperation. But the history of the British Empire made his internationalism and his regionalism different from Roosevelt’s. Empires are, by definition, international. But the vast European commercial and political empires of the three centuries before World War II were global as well. For Churchill that meant Britain should be a (if not “the”) regional power in places like India, East Africa, the Middle East, even China. At the same time, that global instinct, stimulated by 300+ years of empire, was modified by the reality of a relative loss of geopolitical clout as the United States, and later the Soviet Union, became more powerful.

2. All that neatly segues into the second legacy: the “special relationship.” Roosevelt could assume that the United States was a world power. Churchill had consciously and constantly to ensure that Britain would have that status in the postwar world. He placed most (though not all) of his faith in a “special relationship” with the United States. That relationship had, after all, not only worked for Britain during World War II, but it had developed and persisted over the preceding century. This was no new notion for Churchill. His History of the English-Speaking Peoples, largely written before the Second World War, was not focused exclusively on the United States, but without the Americans it would have been shorter.

But the special relationship was often awkward. One example: Churchill and Roosevelt agreed that control of atomic energy (economics) and the bomb (geopolitics) should rest with them. Yet the Americans constantly dragged their feet about sharing Manhattan Project research with the British. Eventually Great Britain developed an atomic bomb on its own, and the special relationship survived. But it was an uncomfortable and humiliating (but perhaps not educational) experience for the British.

There are a number of mythical or non-legacies that serve as defining antonyms for Churchill’s shadow:

- Churchill was a reactionary Tory.
- Churchill was a believer in and practitioner of realpolitik.
- Churchill thought the British Empire could be maintained as it was.
- Churchill was mulishly consistent.
- Churchill was a prescient, early “cold warrior.”
- Churchill was a prisoner of the “special relationship.”
- Churchill “loved” war.

These too are myths or exaggerations that have unfairly captured Churchill’s public image. >>
SHERIFFS AND CONSTABLES...

But before digging a little bit into the minds of Roosevelt and Churchill, before trying to assess their international legacy in the postwar world, we need a brief reminder of the legacies that helped shape their thinking.

The popular judgment, and FDR’s oft-repeated claim, is that his “great crusade” was against “the isolationists.” But what Roosevelt fought before the Second World War was not “isolationism,” no matter how useful he found that label. The real issue was American complacency, over-confidence, and even indifference regarding Hitler’s Germany. Just when Roosevelt started that fight is debatable, but what he had to fight was the persistent American conviction that the United States was always right and that what was “right” was invincible. He had to contend with the popular sentiment that the USA could “go it alone” in the world—something the founding fathers had rejected out of hand 165 years earlier. To the end of his days, FDR feared a resurgence of what he called isolationism, but he could not have foreseen that it would re-emerge in its true character—unilateralism.

Roosevelt’s early thinking on international affairs and structure came, according to most historians, from two presidents: his uncle, Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson, the man who brought FDR onto the national political scene. TR brought “realism” and great power politics to bear; Wilson offered, well... Wilsonianism, that idealistic combining of belief in an American-style political economy (although Roosevelt denied he was a Wilsonian) with a mission, a duty to proselytize, all wrapped neatly in a blanket labeled “international cooperation.”

Churchill likewise inherited a mix of concepts. Some were from Britain’s long and storied history. Others were more recent, particularly the experience of the First World War—the “Great War” until World War II came along. Britain’s tradition of “splendid isolation” was even less isolationist than the American version. Centuries of Anglo-French maneuvering and warfare had convinced British leaders to rely on alliances and control of the seas to protect and forward the nation’s interests. With a vast colonial and commercial empire to tend, British policies had tried to move away from military involvement on the continent. But threats of any dominant power in central or western Europe had repeatedly drawn Britain into wars across the Channel, and the last of those wars had drained Great Britain of its economic and military strength.

Unlike FDR, Churchill helped to create part of the legacies he inherited as prime minister. The ongoing, futile attempt to hold on to a traditional colonial empire distracted Churchill and sometimes his government from more important strategic goals during the war—for example, his preoccupation with the Mediterranean, and with retaking Singapore with “European” troops.3

As Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1924-29, he understood the parlous state of British finances, a reality that forced the government (and Churchill) to ignore dreams of a Singapore “fortress” and which forecast hard times to come.

As he ruefully wrote in 1939: “Money—above all, ready money. There was the hobble which cramped medieval kings; and even now it counts somewhat.”4

The place to start any analysis of both Churchill’s and FDR’s thinking is where they started—with the assumption that great wars are generated by great powers. Everything else proceeded from that premise. The grand myth held by twentieth century American warriors has been that a peaceful world would be the happy and legitimizing outcome of a vast military conflict. Roosevelt was no exception. He dreamily mused about worldwide disarmament, once blithely stating that “the smaller powers might have rifles but nothing more dangerous.” The great powers were exempted, of course, for he knew they would not disarm. But he decriminalized that exemption by calling the great powers “policemen”—an idea he broached even before the United States entered the Second World War. He mentioned it to Churchill at their first meeting in August 1941, and a few weeks later casually spoke during a dinner party about the need for Britain and America “to police the entire world.” He quickly went on to describe “police procedures”: the key was “trust,” not the application of “sanctions” or force.5

Crucial to understanding Roosevelt’s postwar vision is his consistent emphasis on the regional role of the policemen, which by the 1943 Tehran conference included the USSR and China. One journalist, writing with FDR’s approval, described how Roosevelt had conducted a “seminar” for Stalin on the good neighbor policy in the western hemisphere.6

But how are such “policemen” to avoid the Orwellian temptation of creating a sphere of influence in their region? How is such a region different from a Pax Britannica, a Russian empire, or a Monroe Doctrine? Roosevelt perceived a difference; but it was one of many apparent contradictions that he never clarified.7

Churchill’s vision was clearer. Great Britain had been, in some ways, the world’s policeman for over a century. But the Second World War had changed that. Establishment of a regional structure that Britain could manipulate without being an integral part of it would amplify British power, just as it had done for nearly two centuries. Britain as balance-weight in Europe while joined with America in a special relationship seemed the best guarantee for the UK (not a Churchillian term) to retain its role as a great power. Britain was “in” but not “of” Europe. As historian Max Beloff puts it:

nothing could have been further from his [Churchill’s] thoughts than the emergence of a European super-state presenting exactly those pretensions to executive authority which Churchill regarded as the prerogative of the nation-state. During his absence from the seats of power between 1945 and 1951, the essential components of a new Europe began to emerge; to Churchill, the Victorian, they were strange indeed. He was in no sense their prophet.8

For Churchill, an Anglo-American condominium seemed both sensible and possible. Yet, in October 1942,
concern about the Soviet Union prompted him to suggest creation of a postwar European council. “It would be a measureless disaster,” he wrote Eden, “if Russian barbarism overlayed the culture and independence of the ancient states of Europe.” A “United States of Europe” would, presumably, include Russia, but a Russia safely neutralized within a “council consisting of...the former great powers, with several confederations...which would possess an international police and be charged with keeping Prussia disarmed.” Rarely did the Prime Minister so bluntly state his feelings and fears about the Soviets. Normally he was more cautious, putting the burden of any rift on the shoulders of the Bolsheviks.

Yet, he left the door open to postwar cooperation with the Soviet Union, albeit on careful terms. FDR was not a Wilsonian idealist; nor was Churchill, for he too had “problems to resolve.”

Half a year later, Churchill told Roosevelt and a group of American leaders that after the war he favored a “world council” that looked like what FDR called his four Policemen—Great Britain, Russia, the U.S. and (unenthusiastically) China. One step lower in the political pecking order would be regional councils, which in Europe could include nation-states and confederations for places like the Balkans, or a “Danubian federation” to replace the Austro-Hungarian Empire. At the same luncheon meeting, the Prime Minister called for a “fraternal association” between his nation and the United States; perhaps even common passports and a “common form of citizenship.”

Churchill never clarified his vague and very unofficial remarks, leaving the Americans little to go on beyond Foreign Office papers and statements. Harry Hopkins, FDR’s principal adviser, expressed the American concerns when he warned the British against any attempt to establish a European council (based, of course, in London) for fear it would result in American “isolationists” doing the same thing in the western hemisphere. Leadership was not to be exclusive, which was where British proposals seemed to lead. FDR’s regional groupings could not exclude any of the great powers lest that set one region (and one policeman) against another. The Good Neighbor policy and U.S. relations with Canada both illustrated what FDR had in mind. Leadership—which combined persuasion, power, and especially patience—would prevent local crises from morphing into global confrontations.

At the start of the war, Roosevelt had viewed European power politics and colonialism as the greatest threats to postwar peace. But by 1943, he recognized that the Soviet Union had become a new major player on the scene and could, if it so chose, be an even greater threat. The President had no intention of fighting the Second World War in order to get ready for the Third, so bringing the USSR into a cooperative relationship with the other great powers became the priority. From the outset, Stalin had been unequivocal about having “friendly” governments around the Soviet periphery in Eastern Europe, and Roosevelt’s (and an occasionally dubious Churchill’s) dreams of persuading Stalin to be a cooperative participant in the postwar world required that the Soviet leader feel sure of Anglo-American reliability. But since self-determination meant independence for the Balts and the establishment of an anti-Soviet government in Warsaw, how then to avoid the obvious?
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Both Roosevelt and Churchill had tried to create a good postwar relationship with the Soviet Union even before the Stalingrad victory, in February 1943, demonstrated the likelihood of Red Army occupation of the territory Stalin demanded. What recourse was left to London and Washington? Military confrontation was no option, at least not with Anglo-American forces still struggling in North Africa and fifteen months away from an invasion of western Europe. More to the point, what long-term hope for peace if the United States and Britain chose to confront the Russians? More frightening and apparently possible, what if playing diplomatic hardball prompted Stalin to cut a deal with Hitler? Then there was Japan waiting in the wings.

Rather than fruitlessly opposing any expansion of Soviet power in eastern Europe, the Anglo-Americans opted to continue to promote long-term cooperation. As the Americans told British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, “the real decisions should be made by the United States, Great Britain, Russia and China, who would be the powers for many years to come that would have to police the world.” Self-determination would, quite obviously, be bestowed by the Big Four, assuming they could agree on the details.12

What then, of the legacy of Churchill’s and Roosevelt’s policies towards the Soviet Union? Some have argued that it was a horrible, unhappy legacy that “appeased” Stalin’s insatiable appetite for expansion into eastern Europe and beyond. Roosevelt and the British concluded early on that Stalin was “a political descendant of Peter the Great rather than of Lenin.”13 But how could confrontation solve that dilemma?

There is truth in what historian Arthur Schlesinger wrote: “it was the deployment of armies, not words on paper, that caused the division of Europe.”14 That is certainly the case for events from summer 1944 to war’s end. But timing is everything. The fundamental postwar agreements (concessions if you prefer a critical phrase) between the Soviet Union and the Anglo-Americans came before mid-1944, largely during or after the Teheran conference in December 1943. FDR and Churchill assumed, conceded or sacrificed the Baltic nations and much of eastern Europe to Soviet “liberation” well before the great offensives in the east and the west began in June 1944. Given Stalin’s (and Churchill’s and Roosevelt’s) axiom, “whoever occupies a territory imposes on it its own social system,” the postwar political results were a foregone conclusion. But then that was also true for places like West Germany, Italy, and Greece. Churchill’s version of Stalin’s axiom was more grandiloquent: “the right to guide the course of history is the noblest prize of victory.”15 Better to acknowledge that reality than to wait for potential disagreements to arise. The Normandy invasion, quickly followed by the massive offensive in the east that Stalin had promised, ensured that the Russians would not be tempted to roll all the way to the Atlantic, though there is not a shred of evidence that Stalin ever thought, planned, and even dreamed in such terms.

Which brings us to an issue of candor and honesty—the Yalta agreements, a document that is less of a legacy than its reputation suggests. The real problem about Yalta was not the nature of the agreements, but the matter of transparency and expectations. Neither Churchill nor Roosevelt believed they could admit to their publics or their political opponents that they had consigned the Baltic nations, Poland, and much of the south Balkans to the tender mercies of Soviet control. Neither could admit that
they had made concessions in northeast Asia that restored Russian economic and political influence in Manchuria and northern Korea. In each case the reasons were mixed—ensuring Soviet entry into the war against Japan, shoring up Chiang’s regime in China, the reality of Soviet occupation of much of eastern Europe—but establishing a cooperative rather than a confrontational relationship with the Soviet Union was the overriding motive.

It was sometimes a case of making a silk purse out of a sow’s ear, especially in places like the Baltic, but better than playing dog-in-the-manger and getting suspicion and enmity in return. The Declaration on Liberated Europe, agreed to at Yalta, called for the kind of openness and political freedom enjoyed in the United States and Britain. But that was no rhetorical “victory” over the Soviet Union, nor was it intended as such. It expressed a hope not a reality, and thus served to raise expectations for the war’s outcome to unrealistic levels. When those expectations were dashed, American and British frustrations and disillusionment would, as after the First World War, intensify tensions. Only this time it became the Cold War.16

Neither Churchill nor Roosevelt created the tensions between the Soviet Union and their nations. Churchill and Roosevelt were, each in his own way, less ideological than their successors. Despite Churchill’s angry anti-Bolshevik rhetoric when out of office, as prime minister he never chose between a Russia as classic great power to the east, or a Soviet Union as threat to British and American democratic and economic principles. He seemed to speak of Russia when geopolitics were at issue, and Bolshevism when ideology was afoot.

FDR bragged that the New Deal had saved capitalism, but he routinely avoided referring to the Soviet Union in ideological terms. Despite his conscious attempts to avoid the mistakes Woodrow Wilson made after World War I, Roosevelt repeated one of the major errors by promising a just and fair settlement to the war that would bring peace. Neither man promised either “a war to end all wars,” or a “to make the world safe for democracy,” but domestic politics, their own hopes, and their search for a favorable historical verdict combined to prompt both to exaggerate the success of what today we would call the “peace process,” which inaccurately came to be labeled the “Yalta agreements.” Once again, overblown rhetoric created great expectations that, when unmet, led to an atmosphere that heightened the intensity and depth of the Cold War.

The over-analyzed Anglo-American special relationship is the most powerful example of Roosevelt’s and Churchill’s overlapping shadows. Since 1945, Great Britain and the United States have almost always found that, after careful consideration and sometimes considerable argumentation, their interests and desires coincided. The most obvious exceptions are the Vietnam war, where Britain steadfastly refused to support American policy, and the Suez War, where the opposite occurred. But those exceptions did not break the pattern, which has lasted through today and the Iraq War and occupation. There are forceful arguments, particularly among British commentators, about how the “special relationship” has dragged their nation into unwise and even immoral conflicts, but claims that the “special relationship” did not exist are ahistorical political wishes.18

The precedent of working with allies set by Churchill and Roosevelt lived on, through and beyond the Cold War, but in a way fundamentally different from what they imagined. Instead of globalism (regionalized cooperative internationalism), unilateral (formerly isolationist) nationalism returned to rule the roost. What Roosevelt feared the most, what he believed to be the basic cause of the Second World War, once again threatened the peace of the world. Stalin, responding to Churchill’s musings about federations in Eastern Europe, warned Churchill that “after this war all States would be very nationalistic.”19 The Soviet leader ignored his own advice, spreading the Soviet empire westward, but he was on the mark. Over the half-century following World War II, East European nationalism intensified, largely in response to Soviet domination. Eventually that nationalism triumphed, and the Soviet imperial system collapsed of its own weight.

As for Churchill, his retro-focus on reconstructing a version of the world of Franz Joseph with the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a buffer (hardly a bulwark) against Russian expansion apparently blinded him from recognizing the intensity of nationalism in Europe—just as he underestimated it in Britain’s colonial empire. FDR’s warnings about colonial uprisings in the European colonies suggests that he sensed the power of nationalism, but all he could hope for in eastern Europe was that the Russians would act with caution.

Fittingly in the post-WW2 world, the last legacy to address is The Bomb. Prompted by warnings and advice from Albert Einstein and other scientists about German research into atomic energy, the British and Americans, early in the war, pooled their knowledge and resources into what became the Manhattan Project. Time, strategic bombing, and sabotage ensured that the Germans would not succeed in reaching a similar goal before their defeat. Anglo-American scientific success came too late for the atom bomb to be used against Germany, but two were dropped on Japan, seeming to shorten the war.20

But a most unhappy outcome of Roosevelt’s and Churchill’s work together is The Bomb. Prompted by warnings and advice from Albert Einstein and other scientists about German research into atomic energy, the British and Americans, early in the war, pooled their knowledge and resources into what became the Manhattan Project. Time, strategic bombing, and sabotage ensured that the Germans would not succeed in reaching a similar goal before their defeat. Anglo-American scientific success came too late for the atom bomb to be used against Germany, but two were dropped on Japan, seeming to shorten the war.20
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Since World War II we have experienced a half-century of meetings, conferences, back-stairs diplomacy, and back-channel parleys. Even Dwight Eisenhower, the most intense and committed Cold Warrior of all the presidents—he spoke of the Soviet Union in terms of evil long before Ronald Reagan—ignored his own hyperbole and used back-channel diplomacy and negotiations (too slowly for Churchill) within the informal structure FDR had fostered. It was precisely what Roosevelt expected, even if Churchill was more cautious. They created the unwritten “system,” the informal structure that channeled Cold War tensions into regional confrontations between proxies, not global ones between the Great Powers. That offers small consolation to those whose land and societies have been devastated, but it was arguably better than World War III.

Whatever their other (undiscussed) legacies, the world “system” (a word that evokes too strong a sense of order and structure) that Churchill, Roosevelt—and Stalin—established proved a powerful, long-lasting patrimony. Undemocratic, unfair, and often unjust, it hit upon a certain practicality that enabled the world to avoid disaster. At least for a while.

ENDNOTES

1. Churchill once commented, “There is therefore wisdom in reserving one’s decisions as long as possible and until all the facts and forces that will be poten at the moment are revealed.” Churchill to Eden, 4 January 1945, in Winston S. Churchill, Triumph and Tragedy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1953), 351. For FDR, see U.S. Dept. of State [Harley A. Notter], Postwar Foreign Policy Preparation, 1939-1945 (Washington: USGPO, 1950) and Post World War II Foreign Policy Planning: State Department Records of Harley A. Notter [microform] (Bethesda, Md.: 1987).


7. I shamelessly quote and paraphrase myself from The Juggler, 96ff. But also see Lloyd C. Gardner, Spheres of Influence (Chicago: Ivan Dee, 1993).


9. Churchill minute to Eden, 21 October 1942, M.742/2 [T8/8/11], Churchill Archives, Churchill College [emphasis added]; Winston S. Churchill, The Hinge of Fate (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950), 561-62. Martin Gilbert, Road to Victory (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986), 239-40, substitutes Russia for Prussia and thus erroneously quotes Churchill calling for “keeping Russia disarmed.” That mistake apparently led Gilbert to assume that Churchill excluded Russia from the United States (Council) of Europe, which does not appear to be Churchill’s intent, although his phrase “former Great Powers” could be so interpreted. Foreign Office thinking at this time is presented in Woodward, British Foreign Policy, V, 1-21. FDR’s denial of Wilsonism is quoted in Kimball, Forged in War, 201.


13. The comment about Stalin as Peter the Great is that of British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden; Eden to Halifax, 22 January 1942, FO 954/29/sci/100818, Public Record Office (now the British National Archives).


15. As quoted in Kimball, Forged in War, 209-10.

16. This echoes the persuasive argument of Eric Alterman, When Presidents Lie (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), esp. 59-82, who points out that “in refusing to reveal the truth about the accords, the administration only aided and abetted the Yalta conspiracy-mongers...” (62).

17. Wilson’s request to Congress for a declaration of war against Germany on 2 April 1917 included the justification that “The world must be made safe for democracy.” The call for World War I to be “a war to end all wars”) is frequently attributed to Wilson [try “Googling” it], but I have not found a citation. An interview with British Foreign Secretary Lord Grey was reported on 14 May 1916 under the headline “ALLIES FIGHT TO END ALL WAR, SAYS GREY” but the closest Grey came to that phrase was, “Unless mankind learns from this war to avoid war, the struggle will have been in vain.” New York Times, 14 May 1916.

18. I have participated in that over-analysis. See my “Dangerously Contagious? The Anglo-American Special Relationship,” a debate with Alex Danchev, in The British Journal of Politics and International Relations 7:3 (August 2005), 437-41, excerpted in comments by the editor on an abstract of Danchev’s argument in “Whence the Anglo-American Special Relationship?” Finest Hour 129, Winter 2005-06, 40-41. “The ‘Special’ Anglo-American Special Relationship: ‘A fatter, larger underwater cable,’” Journal of Transatlantic Studies 3:1 (Spring 2005), 1-5. The Suez Crisis strained relationships at the very top, but at the next level British policymakers agreed that the invasion was ill-considered.

19. Minutes of the TOLSTOY Conference as quoted in Gilbert, Road to Victory, 1026.

20. I have graced or sullied the pages of Finest Hour 137 with ruminations about that world-shaping event (at least geopolitically). This paraphrases what I wrote there.
Paradoxically, while the Second World War in Southeast Asia had profound political ramifications, Churchill thought it a sideshow, faced as he was with a strategic dilemma of how to be strong in far-flung regions. What British wartime planning there was was based on wishful thinking, self-delusion and flawed perceptions. Ironically, Japanese militarists succumbed to the same fatal mixture, relying on improvisation and false hopes once their Asian blitzkrieg had run its course. For London and Tokyo, the fate of British possessions in Southeast Asia—Singapore, Malaya, and Burma—was of secondary importance to safeguarding India (for Britain) or conquering China (for Japan). British Southeast Asia, and more precisely Burma, was the key to those ambitions. The British fought to save their empire, only to lose it. The Japanese fought to gain an empire, only to fail disastrously.

The bitter and deadly struggle in the rain-sodden jungles of Southeast Asia revealed the inherent hollowness of imperial pretensions. Despite a brief respite in the mid-1940s, the British lost India, the great barrack of Asia. Japan’s effort in China was an unalloyed failure and the Sino-Japanese conflict set in train forces that would result in the emergence of a new great power, the People’s Republic of China.

Churchill, as First Lord of the Admiralty and then as Prime Minister, assigned primacy to the Mediterranean. Underpinning this strategy were two flawed premises. First, in March 1939, Churchill drafted a memo which embodied the conventional wisdom of the day, namely, that the submarine threat had been mastered and that airpower would “not >>
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prevent [the] full exercise of ... superior seapower,” in short, surface vessels. Second, Churchill thought that even if Italy entered the war, the Royal Navy could clear the Mediterranean and be poised to redeploy in defence of Southeast Asia, Singapore in particular. This was a grand and optimistic vision of British seapower at work. The reality would prove different.

Compounding this best-case scenario was the hope, excruciatingly thin at times, that in the event of Japanese hostilities, the United States would come to Britain’s aid. But Churchill doubted that the Japanese would ever undertake such a long-range venture as an attack on Singapore. Even if they did, Singapore’s great guns could surely hold the Imperial Japanese Navy at bay until the Royal Navy dispatched reinforcements. The British were also scathingly dismissive of the fighting capabilities of Japanese pilots and infantrymen. The former, they said, had eyes ill-suited to night fighting; the latter were unable to make their way through tropical jungles.

Whatever the case, British strategy was to give the Japanese no occasion for offence in the hope that Tokyo would not embark on a military campaign outside China, where they had been bogged down for years, fighting both Chiang Kai-shek and the ragged battalions of Mao Tse-tung. If the Japanese could be appeased, even by the sacrificial forfeit of Hong Kong, Britain could get on with defeating the Italians and focus on the real threat, Nazi Germany.

“Fortress Singapore” was the metaphor for Britain’s fatal proclivity for strategic delusion in the interwar years. Commenced in the 1920s, its great naval guns were thought to have rendered Britain’s strategic outpost impregnable. But as Singaporean strategists will tell you, the island’s first line of defence, then as now, is halfway up the Malay Peninsula. Here the Navy was not available; British airpower was inadequate; and the Army, to which ultimate responsibility was destined to shift, was woefully unprepared. As to the comforting reassurance that the Japanese could never advance swiftly through Malay jungles, someone had forgotten that Malaya boasted some of the best roads in the Empire. Worse, indeed much worse, the great rifles at Sembawang had armour-piercing shells designed to subdue enemy warships, not high-explosive munitions designed to shatter Japanese fighting capabilities of Japanese pilots and infantrymen. The former, they said, had eyes ill-suited to night fighting; the latter were unable to make their way through tropical jungles.

On 11 November 1941, the Japanese enjoyed a serendipitous windfall. The German raider Atlantis boarded the steamer Automedon in the Indian Ocean and discovered a British Chiefs of Staff appreciation stating that “in the event of war with Japan, it would be impossible to hold Hong Kong, Malaya, or Singapore.” This was relayed to the Japanese naval attaché in Berlin, and plans were laid accordingly.

Some observers were prescient enough to appreciate Singapore’s vulnerability. The same day that Admiral Nagumo received the order to attack the American fleet at Pearl Harbor, HMS Prince of Wales, HMS Repulse and four destroyers arrived in Singapore. Curiously, this squadron, commanded by Vice-Admiral Sir Tom Philips, was designated Force Z, while Nagumo’s First Air Fleet had been designated Operation Z. Prince of Wales and Repulse were the alpha and omega of British seapower; the former was the Royal Navy’s most modern battleship, the latter one of its oldest battlecruisers.

On hand to see the warships arrive was Lady Diana Cooper, a society beauty who had just landed (with 100 suitcases) in Singapore with her husband, Alfred Duff Cooper, whom Churchill had dispatched to report on Southeast Asia. “Today,” she wrote, “a little fleet arrived to help...a lovely sight but on the petty side.”

Duff Cooper wrote a scathing report about Singapore. To begin with, the command structure was hopelessly confused. The Commander-in-Chief Far East was Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, whom the Coopers uncharitably labelled “old Pop-off.” He had no authority over the Navy or the civil administration in Malaya. The governor of Singapore and the High Commissioner for the Federated Malay States was Sir Thomas Shenton, dismissed deservingly, on the basis of his colonial service in Africa, as “Tom Tom” Shenton. Malaya’s civilian defence secretary, C.A. Vlieand, asserted throughout 1940 that “the army was deluded by the invention of the imaginary fortress of Singapore.”

Another commentator was General Archibald Wavell, Commander-in-Chief India. Wavell had been the celebrated hero of British resistance in North Africa, but his professional career had come dangerously unstuck in the aftermath of the debacle in Crete and Churchill had shipped him off to New Delhi. In India, Wavell embarked on a “liaison” or fact-finding mission to Southeast Asia. He was “horrified” by what he discovered in Burma, where there was a “complete lack of organization, of military intelligence, and of planning generally to meet any Japanese attack.” Wavell knew from his time in the War Office in the 1920s about Singapore’s reputation as the Gibraltar of the Far East, but Major-General Arthur Percival, the General Officer Commanding, Malaya Command, warned that the Japanese might very well “burgl Malaya by the back door,” thereby laying Singapore open to attack. But Wavell misread the situation, reporting on 8 November 1941 that “I should think the Jap has a very poor chance of successfully attacking Malaya and I don’t think, myself, that there is much prospect of his trying.”

A month later, the Japanese crossed into northern Malaya and Admiral Philips led his ships up the east coast of the Malay Peninsula in an effort to interdict Japanese troop transports. Beret of airpower, Prince of Wales and Repulse were quickly sunk by Japanese aircraft (see Singapore papers, FH 139: 40-49). “The relentless demonstration of Japanese technological prowess,” Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper observed, “did more to break civilian and military resistance than any other factor.”

There was an iconic quality about the event. It captured, tragically, the inadequacy of the British response and the dangers inherent in underestimating your opponent. The good news for Churchill was that come what may, he had avoided one of the conditions that he feared almost more than anything else: he was not obliged to lead his nation against the Japanese without American support. The bad news was that the strategic landscape had suddenly become far more complex. American entry into the war in the Pacific meant that the fate of British Southeast Asia and India had become inextricably linked with American efforts to aid Chiang Kai-shek in China against the Japanese. In the dark days of December, Churchill was confronted with managing the increasingly asymmetrical politics of allied warfare.
The Japanese carried everything before them as they marched or bicycled down the peninsula towards Singapore. British troops lacked resolution and found themselves being swept along with thousands of panic-stricken residents “carrying personal effects such as carpets, rattan chairs, golf clubs, tennis rackets, and even canaries in cages.”

When the British blew up part of the causeway leading to Singapore to inhibit the Japanese advance, the explosion was heard at Raffles College some miles away. When the headmaster enquired what the sound was, one of the students piped up, “[t]hat is the end of the British Empire.”

The young Chinese lad was none other than Lee Kwan Yew, first prime minister of the Republic of Singapore in 1959-60. Five days later the garrison of over 85,000 surrendered to an assault force of roughly 30,000 Japanese. President Roosevelt had referred to 7 December 1941 as the “day of infamy.” The Japanese applied the same description to 15 February 1942, because they saw it infamous that an army still able to fight should surrender.

What was astonishing was that the myth of British superiority and invincibility had survived for as long as it did; that a handful of planters, traders, district officers, and missionaries had managed to exercise power over millions who had succumbed to the notion that they were inherently inferior and needed to be led. It was surely one of the greatest triumphs of psychology that the world had ever seen.

What was Churchill’s responsibility? Many of the decisions regarding the fortification of Singapore were made while he was out of office in the 1930s, but as Chancellor of the Exchequer in the mid-1920s, he had hacked away at appropriations for the Senior Service and the Singapore base, writing in 1924 that there was not “the slightest chance of [war with Japan] in our lifetime.”

When Churchill became First Lord of the Admiralty in 1939, it was arguably incumbent upon him to inform himself about Singapore’s defences. But he still imagined that, in extremis, capital ships could be deployed to deter or defeat the enemy. In his memoirs he conceded that “[m]y advisers ought to have known and I ought to have been told, and I ought to have asked.” But “the possibility of Singapore having no landward defences no more entered into my mind than that of a battleship being launched without a bottom.”

In Churchill’s defence, the perilous strategic landscape—France fallen, German submarine offensives in the Atlantic, the dismal outlook in North Africa—was such that no individual could have successfully coped with such an array of assaults. But there are limits to this line of defence. And the Japanese did play into his hands in the sense that they, and the Americans, by virtue of their plethora of personnel and weapons, were determining who should enjoy senior commands. British admirals and generals tended to be assigned secondary and supporting roles, or were appointed to less important theatres.

Another embarrassing failure of arms occurred in Burma in 1943. Churchill reflected the prevailing pessimism about attacking Burma when he observed colourfully that it was like “eating the porcupine quill by quill.” Instead, he favoured some sort of seaborne assault against Japanese positions in Southeast Asia but conflicting demands for ships and landing craft meant that nothing came of his scheme.

A major appointment in 1943 was that of Lord Louis Mountbatten, a young admiral with impeccable royal connections, as Supreme Allied Commander South East Asia (SEAC). Mountbatten, whom American General Stilwell dismissed as a “matinee idol,” was the product of a bargain...
Field Marshal Slim called the flight out of Burma “the longest retreat in military history.”20 Burma was truly the pivot. Sustain the Allied position in northern Burma and you ensured the survival of British India.

But the war in Southeast Asia had become less and less a British war. Increasingly, the fate of Burma was determined by American and Allied victories elsewhere. Churchill was at the heart of the global processes, rallying the people of Britain, urging American support, and trying desperately to guarantee Britain’s place in the postwar world. He was an indomitable figure, a leader of gargantuan proportions. And he was also intensely human: irascible, childish, inspired and inspiring, petulant, demanding, pugnacious, prescient.

At the same time he was a romanticist, a soldier-statesman who saw the war in 18th century terms: a world of fortresses, ships-of-the-line, heroic commanders. The grandeur of empire ran in his blood. While he strove to defend India he was dismissive of the Indians. He was economical with the truth, attempting to obscure the extent of his knowledge of such matters as the fatal unpreparedness of Singapore.

Despite the enormous cost in human suffering, Churchill was right in assessing Southeast Asia as less critical than Europe. Europe was where the mortal threat lay; Southeast Asia by comparison was perceptually and practically a world away. Of course, Australians and New Zealanders saw matters differently; but that is another story.

Fortunately for Britain, the Japanese were not invincible. But having overseen their defeat, Churchill was left with an even greater challenge: how, in opposition and in power, to oversee the dismantling of the empire he had fought so hard to preserve. Thus, the road from disaster to deliverance proved to be the harbinger of another age, bereft of the oratorical cadences and grand certainties of the Churchillian era.

ENDNOTES

3. Ibid., 268.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., 109.
8. Ibid., 223.
9. Ibid., 224.
11. Ibid., 131.
12. Ibid., 130.
13. Ibid., 146.
15. Ibid., 296.
20. Ibid., 265.
THE CHURCHILL QUIZ

James R. Lancaster

Each quiz includes four questions in six categories: contemporaries (C), literary matters (L), miscellaneous (M), personal (P), statesmanship (S) and war (W), with the easier questions first. Can you reach Level 1?

Level 4:
1. Who was the Prime Minister who referred to Churchill, in October 1914, as having a “zigzag streak of lightning in the brain”? (C)
2. 18 June 1940. “Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization.” To which battle did Churchill refer? (W)
3. Complete WSC’s aphorism: “Some men change their principles to fit their parties; others change their parties to fit their — — — .” (S)
4. In The River War, WSC writes “The earth burns with the quenchless thirst of ages, and in the steel-blue sky scarcely a cloud obstructs the unremitting triumph of the sun.” Which country is he describing? (L)
5. “This is a very great country my dear Jack.” Which country was Churchill writing to his brother on 15 November 1895? (L)
6. WSC to his wife 18 April 1912: “I cannot help feeling proud of our race & its traditions as proved by this event. Boatloads of women & children tossing in the sea...and the rest, Silence. Honour to their memory.” To what event did he refer? (M)

Level 3:
7. Who wrote the speech in the 1941 film Lady Hamilton (That Hamilton Woman in the U.S.) in which Nelson says: “You cannot make peace with dictators. You have to destroy them”? (L)
8. What does WSC mean by the chapter heading “In Durance Vile” in My Early Life? (L)
9. When Winston tried to join the 1898 Tirah expedition, who “co-operated energetically from her end...she left no wire uncut, no stone unturned, no cutlet uncooked.”? (P)
10. Who was the sculptor most admired by Churchill? (M)

Level 2:
11. Churchill cabled Roosevelt on 10 January 1945: “I do not see any other way of realizing our hopes about World Organization in five or six days. Even the Almighty took seven.” Which upcoming meeting was he talking about? (S)
12. What was WSC’s reply when Charlie Chaplin told him he was going to play Jesus Christ in his next film? (C)

Level 1:
13. What did Churchill describe in a speech to the House of Commons on 5 October 1938 as “a total and unmitigated defeat”? (S)
14. In which town did Churchill say, during an election campaign in 1906, “Fancy living in one of these streets, never seeing anything beautiful, never eating anything savoury, never saying anything clever”? (P)
15. In which campaign was Winston Churchill first mentioned in despatches? (W)
16. Which war was Churchill referring to when he wrote in My Early Life: “Colonel Byng and I shared a blanket. When he turned over I was in the cold. When I turned over I pulled the blanket off him and he objected. He was the Colonel. It was not a good arrangement.” (W)
17. Which constituency did WSC stand for as an Independent Anti-Socialist in March 1924? (M)
18. Who pronounced these words about WSC: “WHEREAS he has by his art as an historian and his judgment as a statesman made the past the servant of the future...”? (C)

Answers

Churchill as a Literary Character

MICHAEL McMENAMIN

The premise of this new feature is simple: A periodic review of historical novels and thrillers where Churchill appears as a character. After all, it is important that he be portrayed accurately, even if the story is otherwise improbable.

Each review will ask two questions: (1) Is Churchill portrayed accurately and as something more than a plot device? (2) Is the book otherwise worth reading? Two questions, answered with one to three stars, are Portrayal of Churchill (★ = inaccurate; ★★ = accurate; ★★★ = very good) and Worth reading (★ = probably not; ★★ = good read; ★★★ = really good read). So, unless a book receives at least four stars from these two questions, don’t waste your time.

In future columns, I will review one post-2000 book and one published before 2000. I encourage readers to send me [mcmenamin@walterhav.com] their own selections, for good or ill. Use the rating system above and tell me why you gave the rankings you did. If I review a book you referred, I’ll mention that and give you credit in the column, along with whether I agree with your rankings.

Portrayal ★★★
Worth reading ★★★

Russell is a critically acclaimed writer, mostly of science fiction, who has written a delightful novel. Agnes Shanklin is a 40-year-old spinster school teacher from Cleveland who, after World War I, takes a trip of a lifetime to the Holy Land and arrives in Egypt just as the Cairo Peace Conference begins. She already knows T.E. Lawrence (wonderfully and accurately rendered) who introduces her to a condescending Gertrude Bell and, of course, Churchill. She also meets a fictional German spy with whom she has a brief affair.

Agnes is with Churchill on a number of adventures, including the Gaza riots and his visit to Jerusalem. She accompanies WSC on a painting expedition which is taken straight from Inspector Thomson’s memoirs as well as Painting as a Pastime. Winston has a lot of time on stage and much dialogue. His puckish sense of humor comes through on many occasions. It is one of the best fictional portrayals of Churchill I have ever read. In the famous camel party photo (this issue, page 13), Agnes is “the figure at the far left side of the photo.” Russell also gives an accurate rendition of the ins and outs of the peace conference which resulted in modern Iraq, the consequences of which are with us still. Read the book. You won’t be disappointed.

Portrayal ★★★
Worth reading ★★★

Here is a poor man’s Winds of War. It spans the period 1934 to 7 December 1941 and, like Herman Wouk’s masterful work, it covers that period with characters—British, Japanese and American—who are involved in great events. The book’s British character, Cecil Stanford, taught English at the Japanese Naval Academy on Hiroshima Bay, and it is primarily through his eyes that we see Churchill, who appears in two chapters: one in 1936 at Chartwell where WSC suggests Stanford become a correspondent in the Far East and serve as a source of information for him on events there; one at the Cabinet War Rooms in October 1941, where Stanford delivers a report on events in Japan. There is also a brief scene between Roosevelt and Churchill on 12 August 1941 which the writers unfortunately place at “Argentina Bay,” Newfoundland. I know it’s only a typo and they meant Argentia the town; but “Argentina Bay” would be wrong too, because it was “Placentia Bay.”

While I give Gingrich and Co. two stars for the accuracy of their portrayal of Churchill, I do so grudgingly. Little things destroy verisimilitude. WSC drank Johnny Walker, not single malt; he would never have poured “two good fingers of scotch” for a guest and “nearly twice as much for himself”; and he wouldn’t have said, if a guest refused ice, “Good man, can’t see why anyone would water down a proper single malt.” Churchill’s study at Chartwell is inaccurately described as having “overstuffed leather chairs” and a “typical painting of battle” over the fireplace.

Mostly, though, Churchill just doesn’t come to life here, as he does in Dreamers of the Day. The dialogue doesn’t sound like WSC, who is only a prop serving to bring out information from Stanford on Japan that the authors want us to have. He says “my friend” so often he begins to sound like John McCain. I even have doubts that Churchill would have met Stanford in the bunker in 1941.

Don’t get me wrong. I enjoyed the book. Other historical characters appear and U.S. ambassador to Japan Joseph Grew is one who is well-realized. So are several Japanese characters, Admiral Yamamoto among them, who allow us to see the situation from Japan’s point of view. But don’t buy the book for its portrayal of Churchill. It’s not worth it.

Mr. McMenamin is the co-author with Curt Zoller of Becoming Winston Churchill: The Untold Story of Young Winston and his American Mentor, a trade paperback of which will be published by Enigma Books in 2009.
WSC’s Heights of Sublimity: A Landmark in Churchill Studies

MANFRED WEIDHORN

“What a drill sergeant of words he was; what an outrage to let someone like him loose to embarrass and humiliate the rest of us mere mortal users of the language!”

When one reads a book or legal brief for the purposes of teaching or scholarship or rebuttal, the usual procedure is to highlight important passages. Richard Langworth has done just that with the vast corpus of Churchill’s writings and speeches. Within the covers of one thick volume, our Happy Reaper has gathered Churchill’s witticisms, maxims, and ripostes, as well as a rich selection of his scintillating prose passages. The source for each passage is scrupulously given (including the occasional uncertainty). And, at long last, those few famous utterances which Churchill, like Yogi Berra, did not really make are isolated in a limbo. No more should there be inquiries as to whether or where Churchill said this or that, and a department in Finest Hour can be shut down for good. Now, as Casey Stengel used to say, “You can look it up.”

Here is a distillation of Churchill the writer and orator at his best in the various periods of his uniquely long career—as a callow youth seeking both fame and vocation, as a fire-breathing young radical, as a superb “triphibian” military expert, as a Cassandra warning about India (alas!) and Hitler (cheers!), as the greatest war leader of a democracy in peril (with apologies to LG and FDR), as a prudent Cold Warrior (“jaw” rather than “war”), and, finally, as a sage in the era of Mutually Assured Destruction, unwilling to surrender hope despite the many ambiguities of technological progress which he himself had often noted.

What other political leader, living through so many phases and tackling so many different issues, possessed so much curiosity in so many areas, so much erudition and such a consistently mesmerizing style? Ah, but what other leader was a professional writer? This collection also reminds us of Churchill’s Falstaffian side—the corpulent man who likes his drink and who is seemingly never at a loss for a quip just when others think they have him trapped.

Though he trended through the decades from a severe criticism of laissez-faire capitalism to a severe criticism of socialism (which he brilliantly called “Queuetopia”), he, unlike most knee-jerk anti-communists, understood the complexity of life: “Bolshevism is a great evil, but it has arisen out of great social evils” (147); this insight he would also apply to Hitler and Nazism, though not so succinctly. He had a jarring warning for knee-jerk radicals, as well: “Those who talk of revolution ought to be prepared for the guillotine” (394).

Such observations are based on an understanding of the past: “Study history!” (18), and reading this book indeed reminds us of some of the fateful junctures of history. Not just that in 1931 he had a near-fatal street accident in New York City that almost lost us World War II but also that, in 1929, at the eerily arithmetical midpoint of his career, he was toying with the idea of retiring from politics and even emigrating to Canada (155). The letter expressing such velleities suggests that his My Early Life, being written at that time, was a valedictory memoir and that his sadly unfulfilled career might well have become a mere footnote in history, a “study,” as Robert Rhodes James put it, “in failure.” But he stayed on, and compelling are the selections from the speeches of the 1930s, on the rearming of Germany and the flaccidity of the Baldwin-Chamberlain response. Juxtaposed with each other in this anthology, these passages create a chill in the reader, as he temporarily suspends his awareness of the ultimate happy though costly outcome.

With such a wealth of material (15 million words) on such a wide range of topics, Langworth faced a major decision about organization: Would he go by alphabet, or chronology, or topic? Tough call. In the end, he arrived at a happy compromise: Broad topics (though in no inevitable pattern); alphabetically ordered subdivisions within them; chronology within the latter. As warranted, he allowed himself variations and exceptions. It is not always a perfect solution—for example, one of Churchill’s greatest sentences, the one about being turned out after five years’ success, is hard to track down, as is the fascinating question of when he first expressed the ambition to become Prime Minister, or when he spoke of being shot at without result (the index needs redoing; it simply cannot perform all that is asked of it)—but the result is better than that of all those other schemata that have been tried from time to time.

Greatly helpful are the cross-references among the famous utterances. These are part of the editor’s sage interventions, as after every two or three items, Langworth provides brief comments (footnotes, as it were) which clarify, correlate, quote, refer, contextualize, and sometimes take a wider view. >>
BOOK REVIEWS

CHURCHILL BY HIMSELF...

When necessary, he glances at recent or current events and tendencies, but in an objective, non-partisan fashion. One cannot tell—rightly so—whether he is a Left or Right Churchillian, only that his erudition is immense. With these judicious notes, Langworth is the Virgil to the reader’s Dante. And that image is not far-fetched, for the journey takes us through vast tracts of Hell and Purgatory and even proffers (beyond Virgil’s power) glimpses of heaven—or at least of peace and relatively good times.

This book reminds the reader that, not only does Churchill’s prose (in any period of his career, unlike the poetry of the gradually maturing Shakespeare) roll as smoothly as the Mississippi, but, except for occasional boilerplate about patriotism, duty, and morality—values necessary in a leader’s rhetorical arsenal but often overdone by lesser politicians—it shows little of the Victorian purple rhetoric that some “modern” (as Churchill might have said with a sneer) literary critics have complained about.

Passage after passage demands to be read aloud for the sheer aural and verbal effects. Churchill’s brilliance in discursive reasoning and expository prose is there right at the beginning, as in, for example, his prescient and eloquent argument in 1901 that future European wars (which seemed to have become obsolete or unthinkable) would be dreadful (504).

Churchill’s is a unique way of expressing himself, whether in rolling period, in careful or stimulating choice of words, in surprising twist of thought, in inspired use of concrete detail. Just note one example of the many amusing ways he had of asserting that a political opponent was wrong or untruthful (or that the opponent had only by chance stumbled upon the truth): “An uncontrollable fondness for fiction forbade him to forsake it for fact.” (232) Where in American politics, since that lovable Senator Everett Dirksen in the 1960s—though he was often more windbag than Churchillian—do we have anybody like that? For shame, inarticulate Americans!

But no less stunning is the eruption of the homely simile or metaphor that brings the discussion home to even the dullest mind. To wit, many people have observed that the opposite extremes of Communism and Fascism actually meet; but only Churchill comes up with the apt analogy of the North and South Poles, equally cold and barren (384). Other examples: “China, as the years pass, is being eaten by Japan like an artichoke, leaf by leaf” (157). Warning against the “great folly” of extending the Korean War into China, he said, “It would be like flies invading fly-paper” (437). Or take this paean to democracy: “The alternation of Parties in power, like the rotation of crops, has beneficial results” (110). Or his poetic, patriotic, and mischievous praise of the American constitution: “...no constitution was written in better English” (127).

Then there is his unprecedented and risky injection of humor in speeches during dire situations: “We are waiting for the long-promised invasion. So are the fishes” (160). On discontinuing the plan to ring church bells to warn of a German landing: “...I cannot help feeling that anything like a serious invasion would be bound to leak out” (297).

Hitler, in forgetting about the Russian winter, “must have been very loosely educated....I have never made such a bad mistake as that” (347). Or take the earthy way he has in making the pedes-trian military observation that Hitler has lost air power superiority: “Hitler made a contract with the demon of the air, but the contract ran out before the job was done, and the demon has taken on an engagement with the rival firm” (207).

But to cite these examples is to betray hundreds of equally great ones. What a drill sergeant of words he was; what an outrage to let someone like him loose to embarrass and humiliate the rest of us mere mortal users of the language!

Legends have it that when Milton’s Paradise Lost was published, John Dryden, the greatest poet of the next generation, said to fellow poets, “This man cuts us all out, and the ancients too.” In the same way, all those collections of the “Wit and Wisdom of Churchill” are now rendered automatically obsolete. Indeed it is hard to think of a “Wit and Wisdom” vade mecum devoted to anyone (other than perhaps Shakespeare)—Pope, Twain, Wilde, Shaw, Proust, Lincoln—that is not diminished by the scope of this book, the volume of memorable utterances, the helpful commentary. As a trove of profound observations, rolling periods, amusing—often hilarious—one-liners, it threatens the hegemony of Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations. Who could have thought that any one man had so many wonderful things to say? He makes the value of the other merchandisers of sagacity seem inflated.

Langworth’s previous Churchill work was A Connoisseur’s Guide to the Books of Sir Winston Churchill, a definitive work of interest only to that class of harmless eccentrics known as book collectors. Churchill by Himself (nice title, too) is, however, of interest to anyone who loves English—nay loves language itself—for its evidence of how this puny, featherless, two-legged creature called man can use his invention of words to reach heights of sublimity. In short, although not conventional scholarship or criticism, which advances a new interpretation or reveals obscure documents or connects the dots in a revisionist fashion, this book is nothing less than a landmark in Churchill studies. Indeed, thanks to Langworth’s efforts, some academic scoundrel will no doubt spare himself the time-consuming task of reading Churchill’s forty or so books and rather use just this one volume in order to write a credible monograph on “Churchill’s political philosophy” or “Churchill’s Prose Style” or “Churchill and...” any number of topics. Churchill was certainly right to have his doubts about “progress.”

A compliment: the editor has placed the inevitable errata (mostly his words not Churchill’s) on the web, which readers can consult and even add to, pending the next printings. A caveat: The illustration of Churchill for the dust jacket of the British edition is an “unnitigated defeat,” while the U.S. edition is a smashing success. Poor Britons!

Editor’s note: In my advancing decrepitude I mistakenly commissioned a second review of this book by Professor David Dikls (and two reviews of Peter Clarke’s book opposite). It would be churlish to drop one for the other, and presumptuous to run them back to back and be accused, as I will be anyway, of promoting my own book. The best I can do is to publish the second reviews of each work in the next Finest Hour. I am sorry for this lapse. Also, the errata Professor Weidhorn refers to are at http://xrl.us/j2uc8. RML
Empire’s End: Churchill’s Centrality

DAVID FREEMAN


A former professor of Modern British History at Cambridge University and Master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, Clarke is a biographer of Sir Stafford Cripps and the final volume in the Penguin History of Britain. Thus he is well qualified to consider British military, imperial, diplomatic and economic history from the Second Quebec Conference in August 1944 to the independence of India in 1947: the last thousand days when Britain functioned as a major player in world affairs. For most of them, Clarke observes, Churchill is “the central figure in the story.”

The recurring metaphorical theme is that first Churchill and then Attlee were (in Attlee’s own words) “playing the hand they were dealt.” But this also points out the book’s primary weakness: its narrow focus. Clarke does not get into how the British came to be dealt the hand they were playing. The deal took place before the time covered in his text, and readers interested in this aspect of British Imperial history will have to look elsewhere—such as former Churchill Archives Centre Keeper Piers Brendon’s The Decline and Fall of the British Empire (2007), which covers the period from 1781 to 1997. Still, for a virtual day-by-day account of the Empire’s “final days,” this book can’t be beat.

The day-by-day aspect is important. These were hectic times. The number of issues and decisions that had to be grappled with each day and their complex interconnectedness were monumental. Economic, political and military realities circumscribed the decision-making process—a fact overlooked in revisionist histories that focus on single topics such as Palestine, India or the origins of the Cold War. With the luxury of time and hindsight, too many historians have inquired into “what should have been done,” instead of understanding the context in which important decisions were made.

Clarke avoids the revisionist trap by relying heavily on the diaries and papers of the major figures of the era to illustrate their concerns, and how they attempted to maneuver under the circumstances they faced. Churchill dominates the first two-thirds of the narrative, as Clarke shows “how intractably Britain’s postwar problems were rooted in precisely those wartime commitments that had brought victory.”

If Churchill was the architect of victory, Clarke concludes, “he was surely to this extent also the author of Britain’s post-war distress” (xvii). “Victory at all costs” was promised and delivered. Yet without victory, Churchill rightly prophesied, there would have been no survival. Clarke illustrates how Churchill himself appreciated Britain’s declining position in the closing months of the war and attempted to salvage what he could on the economic front through Lend-Lease negotiations; on the Imperial front by trying to delay Indian independence; and on the international front by his deal with Stalin to keep Greece free of communism.

The postwar Attlee government simply wound up the process with the 1946 American loan (paid off in 2006), withdrawal from India and Palestine, and transfer of responsibility in Greece and Turkey to the new Western superpower. Clarke’s facing of the facts head-on does not diminish Churchill’s greatness. Instead, Clarke depicts a great man at work making decisions both right and wrong but always respecting the institutions of parliamentary democracy and working for what he saw as the best interests of his country.

No Contradiction Accepted

ANTOINE CAPET


The idea of writing books on particular events or days in world history is not new: France used to have a very successful series entitled “Ce jour-là…” (on that day…). The format seems to be enjoying a revival, with for instance Peter Stansky’s book on The First Day of the Blitz and John Lukacs’ latest offering, ostensibly on Churchill’s famous speech of 13 May 1940, now known as the “Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat” speech, coming after his Five Days in London.

No reader reasonably well versed in Churchill scholarship will expect to find new information on that speech, but I expected an extensive commentary full of exciting insights and novel visions: why write a book (in fact a lengthy essay, with all the tricks of the trade—double spaces, large font, blank pages—to make it into a marketable book) if you have no new documents or ideas to justify its existence? By contrast the Levenger Press book Their Finest Hour, on the equally famous speech of 18 June 1940, has a foreword on how Churchill wrote it and the events of the day, and a facsimile holograph of the actual speech notes from the Churchill Archives Centre.

This new book’s reason for being only begins to appear in a footnote in the last two pages—in cauda venenum: Lukacs is out to refute David >>

Professor Freeman teaches history at California State University, Fullerton.
BOOK REVIEWS

**BLOOD, TOIL, TEARS AND SWEAT...**

Reynold's argument, in his *In Command of History*, that Churchill had private doubts behind the brave face he put before the public. "This is worse than a mistaken attribution of motive. It is entirely wrong," Lukacs concludes on the final page and the final words of his book (147). I was somewhat taken aback, because I remembered Reynolds' discussion as full of nuance and subtlety. I also remembered his impressive examination of the question in his older essay, "Churchill and the British 'decision' to fight on in 1940: Right policy, wrong reasons."

Unfortunately, because of the "popular" format of Lukacs's essay, there are no references (and no index). So I reached for my copy of *In Command of History* and after a few false tracks I found the incriminated passage:

Churchill's public rhetoric [in *The Second World War*] is not an exact guide to his private policy in 1940. Whatever he said to raise morale, his best hope at this time was an eventual negotiated peace with a non-Nazi German government. His worst fear, despite his innate confidence, was that he would not live to see it. (Lukacs, 147; Reynolds, 173.)

And reading the quotation in context provided the give-away: Lukacs was in fact settling accounts with Reynolds who, in his pages 170-73, tried to distance himself from Lukacs:

Halifax’s biographer, Andrew Roberts, has attacked as "simplistic and unhistorical" the tendency to depict this in "the black and white of the treacherous Halifax versus a heroic Churchill." On the other side, John Lukacs has dramatized a fundamental clash between the "visionary" Churchill and the "pragmatist" Halifax on which "the fate of Britain" and even "the outcome of the Second World War" largely hinged.

Apparently, Lukacs does not accept any contradiction to the suggestion, which dominates his *Five Days in London*, that Churchill was the hand of God incarnate. Thus he wrote *Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat* to confound his critics and reiterate his view of Churchill as a providential hero, somehow enlisting Churchill’s retrospective description of his mood as he went to bed on 10 May ("I felt as if I were walking with Destiny") in *The Second World War*. His central thesis is that Churchill’s magnanimity towards Chamberlain after 10 May (e.g., allowing him to stay in Downing Street) brought "providential results"—the most evident one being that a grateful Chamberlain did not then combine with Halifax to sap Churchill’s authority over the conduct of the war and organise opposition to the eventual decision to fight on.

It is never pleasant to have to criticize the work of a senior colleague, but this writer is unfortunately forced to conclude that *Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat* is a gravely flawed history: Manicheanism and Providentialism do not belong with the toolbox of the historian, but with that of the propagandist and proselyte.

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**Pioneer of Secret Intelligence**

**DAVID FREEMAN**

*‘Blinker’ Hall, Spymaster: The Man Who Brought America into World War I, by David Ramsay. Spellmount, 320pp., illus., hardbound, $37.95. Member price $34.*

At the start of the First World War, Captain Reginald “Blinker” Hall (1870-1943) retired from sea duty owing to failing health. Fortuitously he was given a desk job as Director of Naval Intelligence (DNI). This placed him in the Admiralty in direct contact with the First Lord, Winston Churchill. Hall quickly set about organizing a crack team of civilians and sailors who operated out of “Room 40,” the prototype for the Bletchley Park code-breaking operation in the Second World War.

Hall’s team had some luck at capturing lost German code books, but they were equally adept at cracking German naval and diplomatic codes. Fortunately for the Allies, the arrogant Germans could not conceive the idea of their codes being penetrated, and Room 40 provided an invaluable stream of intelligence throughout the war.

Churchill played a key role in approving Hall’s request to set up a signals intelligence (SIGINT) network. Since 80 percent of the world’s cable lines were then under British control, the Germans had to rely on wireless communication to communicate with their overseas embassies. Radio communica-
A Life in Easily Readable Bits

CHRISTOPHER H. STERLING

The author of eight “Best Little Stories” books, a journalist and part-time teacher of news writing at the University of Virginia, Brian Kelly provides a great present for anyone (especially a young person) who’s just been introduced to Churchill, but can’t face the massive tomes on which more seasoned students rely. It’s a ready way of dipping into a gripping life, in a format made for picking up and putting down, just right for busy modern lives.

Arranged in chronological order and providing a glimpse of different aspects of Churchill’s story, the several dozen tales told here are based on a variety of sources (many listed in the back), but avoiding footnotes that are sometimes so off-putting to casual readers. Many quotes are identified in the text (Martin Gilbert is often cited). Based in part on Kelly’s series of lectures, sponsored by the University of Virginia, and delivered at Oxford in the summer of 2007, the readable stories incorporate a degree of familiarity (the subject is usually identified as “Winston”) that some readers may find odd. Kelly’s spouse, Ingrid Smyer-Kelly, provides a fifty-page informal biography of Lady Randolph, Churchill’s American mother (mistakenly identified as “Lady Churchill”). But the account is reliable, falling for none of the unproven and prurient stories that surround Lord and Lady Randolph.

For the most part, the book avoids typical Churchill pitfalls, thanks to the sources and people Kelly has relied upon, including The Churchill Centre and some of its authorities. While most of the stories concern Churchill himself, a few focus on such important figures as Clementine, American Ambassador Gilbert Winant, Lord Mountbatten, even Churchill’s wartime transport pilots. Some sections focus on places, such as a one-pager on the background of Ten Downing Street. Many stories are followed by an “additional note” which fills in details or provides further context.

Kelly writes well and to the point. His collection of stories is a fast and enjoyable read. While these pages may not offer new insights, providing a ready “point of entry” for newcomers to the Churchill story is service enough. 

Damned with No Praise

MICHAEL McMENAMIN


I think it was Carlyle who wrote that “No book that will not improve by repeated readings deserves to be read at all.” That pretty much sums up Nigel Knight’s new one on Churchill. If you want to read a Churchill book that is unreservedly negative on almost all aspects of his career, pick up Clive Ponting’s biography instead. Or even David Irving’s. Really. You’ll thank me for it.

Two-thirds of Knight’s book is devoted to World War II (which the Allies won despite Churchill’s best efforts to give the game away). Chapter 7’s title, “Dunkirk: Churchill’s Defeat,” lets you know where Knight is coming from. The last paragraph in the book tells you where he ends up:

[It] was Hitler who made Churchill a historical figure. If it had not been for Hitler, Churchill...would be largely forgotten today. It is because of Churchill’s role in World War II...that we remember Churchill, above all else, for Hitler’s defeat. Hitler, however, is remembered for himself.

No, I’m not making this up. That’s the last sentence in the book. What does it mean? You tell me. I can think of several explanations.

First, maybe Nigel just isn’t that good a writer. I almost didn’t make it past the first page after reading this sentence: “In 1895 Churchill endured the deaths of both his father and his childhood nurse, to whom he had been very attached as his American mother, Jennie, had ignored him.”

Of course, Jennie hadn’t ignored >>
Jay Piper: Throwing a Line to a Fellow Sailor

LARRY KRYSKE

Jay Piper, twenty-six years a CC member, discovered Churchill while recovering from open heart surgery in 1984. A friend gave him William Manchester’s *The Last Lion* as a get-well present. Jay recounted that “a lot of people have feet of clay, but Sir Winston Churchill in my eyes was a genuine hero.”

Jay had seawater in his blood. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1955 until 1974 aboard nineteen ships ranging from aircraft carriers to cruisers and destroyers. And he had music in his soul. He played with several Navy bands and served as bandmaster at a number of commands. His tours of duty included serving as bandmaster for the Commander, Cruiser Destroyer Flotilla 12 and for Commander, U.S. Second Fleet. His favorite tour was as part of Admiral Briscoe’s U.S. Naval Forces, Europe, home ported in Naples, Italy. Jay rose through the ranks to Command Master Chief at the U.S. Naval Hospital in Bremerton, Washington, and also served as bandmaster for the 13th Naval District in Seattle.

In 1969, Jay was a co-founder of the Navy Alcohol Rehabilitation Program, which helped over 500,000 sailors over the next thirty-nine years. After he retired from the Navy he was involved with various hospital intervention programs in San Diego and at Scripps Institute in La Jolla. His marketing and public relations expertise made him a valuable promoter of those programs.

Jay later became the director of the Farragut Brass Band in Bremerton, Washington, where he also played solo tenor plus French horn in the local symphony. In September 1994, the Farragut Brass Band played the ceremony for the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II aboard the battleship USS Missouri, where General Douglas MacArthur had accepted the Japanese surrender in Tokyo Bay (see *Finest Hour* 140:73).

Churchill’s magnanimous nature has served as a powerful inspiration to Jay Piper. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina claimed over 600 books and 50 videos about Churchill belonging to this writer, then living in Pascagoula on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Jay was looking for a good home for his Churchill collection of over one hundred books. He decided to “throw Commander Kryske a line” and donated his entire collection to him. Jay’s kindness and big-heartedness were certainly in keeping with the finest traditions of Winston Churchill, who once observed, “Compassion, charity and generosity are noble virtues...”

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**GREATEST BRITON UNMASKED...**

him and Churchill certainly wasn’t “very attached” to his father. Perhaps Knight only meant Churchill was attached to Mrs. Everest, his nurse “Woomany,” and not his father as well? The sentence doesn’t say that, but I gave him the benefit of the doubt and read on.

A second explanation is that Knight just doesn’t know much about Hitler or the Nazis—a flaw which tends to put a Churchill biographer at a disadvantage. I confess that I didn’t make it past Chapter 3, “Disarmament: Weakening Britain’s Defence in the 1920s” before I started skimming. Hey, what’s good enough for Carlyle is good enough for me.

Knight’s thesis is that when Churchill was at the Exchequer in Baldwin’s first government from 1924 to 1929, “Churchill’s desire for disarmament in the 1920s weakened national defences just at the time when the threat from the active Nazi movement in Germany was becoming apparent.” (There’s also a hint of this in Boutillier’s article on page 45, column 1. —Ed.)

Give me a break. Apparent to whom? Hitler was in jail during 1924 when Churchill became Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Nazi Party was banned in Germany as a result of its failed *putsch* in Munich the year before.

Hitler began to rebuild the party in 1925 and was so miserably unsuccessful at it over the next four years that the party received only 2.6% of the vote in the 1928 Reichstag elections, good for a paltry twelve seats. By the spring of 1929, the Conservatives and Churchill were out of power. The “threat from the active Nazi movement in Germany” didn’t become apparent to anyone until 14 September 1930 when, thanks to the worldwide depression, the Nazis went from 2.6% and twelve seats to 18.3% and 107 seats, making them the second largest party in Germany.

With this level of scholarship, I wasn’t about to give Knight any more of my time than necessary to write this review. (The editor says we must cover *everything*.) If he can get one thing so spectacularly wrong, in order to fit his prejudices, why trust him on anything else?

So, you’ve been warned. If despite all this, you’ve got to have this book to complete your collection, don’t pay retail! The price is sure go down.
Since its inception in 1968 the Winston Churchill Study Unit promoted collecting “Churchill-related” stamps alongside Churchill commemoratives to create philatelic biographies. Here are three pages which illustrate the dramatic naval events of 1914 using four Churchill stamps and fifteen “Churchill-related.”

At the end of July 1914, Churchill as First Lord of the Admiralty sent the Fleet to its battle station in Scapa Flow, “eighteen miles of warships running at high speed in absolute blackness” up the English Channel (right).

On 1 November the Royal Navy lost two capital ships and 1500 lives to German Admiral von Spee’s squadron off Coronel, Chile. But Churchill ordered Admiral Sturdee to pursue von Spee around Cape Horn, and in December, when he sailed into the Atlantic, all but one of his ships were sunk. At lower left is Spee’s route across the Pacific, with German, British and French stamps postmarked along the way. Stamps at lower right show a map of the area and commemorate the victory in the Battle of the Falkland Islands.
fellow bibliophile, Marc Kuritz, wrote to say that he had an 1898 copy of Churchill’s first book, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force 1897* (to give it its longest title) which did not seem to fit into any of the “A1” sub-entries in my Bibliography. Marc loaned me the volume to examine.

While I was pleased to find that I had indeed included it in the Bibliography, I had only ever seen a single copy of this extremely rare variant. (The other is in the New Zealand National Library.) It is the scarcest appearance of Churchill’s first title, one of only forty-six copies of domestic sheets transferred to the Colonial Library issue (Cohen A1.2.f). But I am getting ahead of myself. I will deal with that copy’s characteristics anon.

Most Churchill collectors are grateful to own any edition of the Longmans Malakand, domestic or colonial, because there were so few. The book was first published on 14 March 1898. The second (Silver Library) edition, with hundreds of revisions, was published on 1 January 1899; the last printing was in February 1901 and sales trickled out until June 1912, when 663 copies of that printing remained on hand at the House of Longmans.

The First Edition
Printed on rather thick, white wove paper for the domestic market, and much thinner, white laid paper for the colonial markets, the first edition was produced in two different forms—for good reason. The laid sheets were both thinner and lighter, which reduced the size of the colonial copies, making them more economical to ship to far-off places than the larger domestic copies.

The domestic issue (A1.1.a) was published in a solid moderate yellowish green binding case. Cased copies of the Colonial Library issue (A1.2.a), on the other hand, had a much more elaborate, illustrated front cover. Printed blackish blue on a greenish grey background, it depicted a schooner at sea (the Longmans’ logo) over a fanciful seaweed or floral design at the foot. There was also a softbound issue in wrappers.

Churchill, stationed in India at the time of publication, had asked his uncle, Moreton Frewen, to proofread the book before publication. Frewen’s ineffective effort is evident in the “gross & fearful” blunders found by Churchill in the proofs he read in India eight days after publication.

When the young author finally saw a finished copy of the book after publication, he described a number of the errors as “unpardonable” and referred to a “great number of emendations [by Frewen] which have made my blood boil.” He cabled the publisher but he was of course too late; his only recourse was to have errata slips printed and inserted in the volumes.

Mr. Cohen, of Manotick, Ontario, is the author of the seminal *Bibliography of the Writings of Sir Winston Churchill* (Continuum, 2006), the standard bibliography of Churchill’s work. All “A” numbers (“A1.2.f,” etc.) refer to the Cohen bibliography.
There were two printings of the colonial issue in March 1898: the first, numbering 2000 copies, and the second, numbering 1000 copies. Although I have examined many copies of the Colonial Library issue, I have been unable to discover any characteristics that would distinguish first and second printing copies. Consequently, all observations in this article apply to all printings of the Colonial Library issue of the first edition.

The Errata Slips

There were two styles of errata slips. The first was printed in India, at Churchill’s anxious behest, on or about 7 April 1898 (see A1.2.c). That slip included sixteen errata and was printed on white laid watermarked paper. There are no details regarding the number of such slips printed, but they are only found in Colonial Library copies sold in India. Churchill was reimbursed 20 rupees for his expenses, about 40 percent of what he had claimed from his British publisher.

The second errata slip was printed by Longmans Green in London on 19 April 1898 (see A1.2.d). About 1700 of these were inserted in both the domestic and Colonial Library copies that remained on hand as of the date of their availability.

The Variant Page 231

Some colonial copies, but no domestic volumes I have encountered, have a page number 231 in which the “1” is raised. The level of the “1” migrates above the base level of the three digits which comprise the page number, as though the type had shifted in the course of printing. The movement of the slug seems to have been progressive: the distance from the descender line of the “3” to the mean line at the top of the “1” varies between just over 3 mm to as much as 5.7 mm.
The Canadian Colonial Library Issue

There was a Canadian issue of the Colonial Library sheets, cased, and easily distinguished by the name of the Canadian publisher, Copp, Clark Co., Limited, on the spine and the title page (A1.2.e).

The Wrappers Issue

There was also a Colonial Library issue in paper wrappers, printed dark purplish blue on pale green (A1.2.b) to a uniform design used on other Longmans colonial titles in wrappers. Although the majority of the colonial issue, 1675 of the 3000 copies printed, were “sewn” rather than “cased,” their perishable format has made them very rare today.

The Prize of Prizes: the Colonial Library Issue of Domestic Sheets

On 13 October 1898, Longmans Green apparently had a small surplus of domestically-destined sheets and an urgent need for colonial copies. So the publisher assigned forty-six sets of the domestic sheets to the Colonial Library (A1.2.f). They were bound in cases identical (in a design sense) to those of the standard Colonial Library issue, but they are 30 percent thicker (39.1 rather than 30.6 mm) in order to accommodate the thicker domestic sheets. The paper is, of course, the white wove paper of the domestic sheets but the page size has been trimmed from 191 x 127 mm to 183 x 121 mm.

It was of course necessary to provide these copies with a new title page, since the books were intended for sale in the Colonies, and the new title page was printed on wove paper to match the domestic sheets in feel and (subtle) appearance. It is, however, surprising (to me, at least) that the middle initial “L.” was dropped from the author’s name (although it remained on the front cover of the volume). This also matched the title page of the first printing of the Silver Library edition in 1899, although the excised letter “L.” returned to the title page of the 1901 second printing of the Silver Library edition.
Since the title page was replacing the domestic title page, already integrally included in the first signature of the domestic copies, the original title page was “cancelled” and replaced by the Colonial library leaf, which is tipped directly onto the leaf that is pp. v/vi. (A “cancel” is a replacement sheet, glued or pasted to the “stub” of the sheet it replaces.)

Given the date of transfer of these domestic sheets to the Colonial Library, all such copies will include the domestic errata slip (tipped onto page 1 of the Kuritz and New Zealand National Library copies).

The Silver Library Colonial Issue

There were two printings of the Colonial Library issue of the second edition (Silver Library) of the Malakand (A1.4.a and A1.4.b). These are cased in the “Longmans’ Colonial Library” boards rather than the maroon casings that distinguish the domestic Silver Library editions. These too are extremely rare issues. I have discovered no aberrations or variants in these copies, other than the restoration of the “L.” in the author’s name in the second (1901) printing, and the change of date on the title page.


Churchill on Postcards

THE MOST “CARDED” POLITICIAN OF HIS TIME?

Picture postcards appeared in Britain in 1894 and quickly became as popular for communications as email is today. In the early days the cost of postage in Britain was a halfpenny (equal to about 0.1 of a current penny) and only the address could be written on the reverse. Messages were written above, below, or even on the picture; blank space was often provided for this. Picture postcards caught on, became a craze, then a cult. Collecting postcards became a significant hobby, rivalling and possibly even surpassing postage stamps, which had a fifty-year head-start. The pastime is known as Deltiology and has spread across the world. Most collectors specialise in a particular subject, and one of the most popular is Winston Churchill. These examples are from the collection of the editor and late Douglas Hall, former FH features editor, who first wrote about Churchill postcards in Finest Hour 86, Spring 1995.

Above: WSC was a popular figure as World War I broke out (left); the allied flags are Belgium, France, Russia, Serbia, Britain and Montenegro. Ditto World War II, especially after he became PM (right; unfortunately this is one of those two-fingered salutes he used interchangeably with the V-sign!). Below: A trio from WW2. Left, a tattered Belgian, her shackles broken, exclaims “à W Churchill, la Belgique reconnaissante” (to W Churchill [from] grateful Belgium). Middle, a French card, which we think is pro-WSC, with the hearts and all—but he’s in bed in an ashtray wearing a 4th Hussars cap much too big—hmm. Right, a “Photochrom” card by the prolific Agnes Richardson, who combined photos of WSC and Union Flag with her unique cherubic children. This one is postmarked 13 August 1944.
Above: The message (left) is unclear from a caption. “Adolf’s future being decided by the Big Four.” The nurses or matrons are Eden, WSC, Chamberlain (holding baby) and another figure who is unknown. The only time the three were together in government was May 1940 until November when Chamberlain died. Right: A Belgian postcard postmarked 17 May 1900 is captioned “La Guerre Anglo-Boer. Arrivée à Pretoria des prisonniers du train blindé d’Estcourt (Lord Churchill [sic] à gauche en casquette).” Below: Churchill’s appearance as Home Secretary at the Siege of Sidney Street (left) received massive publicity. “I understand what the photographer was doing,” Arthur Balfour said, “but what was the Rt. Hon. gentleman doing?” Churchill’s engagement to Clementine Hozier (right) had more uniform approval; this Cortenberg card gives a wider view than the more common Valentine’s and Rotary engagement cards. Bottom of page: A pair of recent Valentine’s photographic postcards containing a fine illustration of the House of Commons (with the “blood, toil, tears and sweat” quote); and views of Blenheim Palace.

Above: A great fan of Charlie Chaplin, WSC is pictured here with Chaplin (seated ahead of him) and his co-star Virginia Cherrill, at the premiere of “City Lights”, 27 February 1931.
Churchill and Henry George

“Gentlemen, where are we going to get the money?”


In “Ampersand” (FH 139:58) you quote Churchill’s 1928 speech explaining “why Henry George failed in his single tax proposal.” Churchill, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, said that “almost before the ink was dry” on George’s 1879 book, Progress and Poverty, “it was apparent that there were hundreds of different ways of creating and possessing and gaining wealth which had either no relation to the ownership of land or an utterly disproportionate or indirect relation. Where there were 100 cases twenty years ago there are 10,000 cases now.”

Unfortunately, Churchill did not favor his listeners with any examples of the 100 or 10,000 cases he claims existed. That was as impossible in 1928 as it is today, for we are all “land animals” from birth to death, and every activity we engage in, wealth-producing or not, takes place on some land somewhere, “land” in economics meaning all freely-provided gifts of nature—water; minerals; the electronic spectrum; solar, wind and tidal power; on rural and urban sites. George saw that the value of this “land” is community-created and thus the appropriate source of public revenue, making possible the abolition of all taxes on production.

The fact that the United States and the Western world now face a financial crisis brought on by the collapse of speculative real-estate (land) values is only one example of the accuracy of Henry George’s economic analysis. Despite having changed his position on the Single Tax, Churchill is probably best known by Georgists for the following quotation, from a speech delivered at King’s Theatre, Edinburgh on 17 June 1909: “It is quite true that land monopoly is not the only monopoly which exists, but it is by far the greatest of monopolies; it is a perpetual monopoly, and it is the mother of all other forms of monopoly.”

CATHARINE ORLOFF
FORMER DIRECTOR, HENRY GEORGE SCHOOL OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA, PROVIDENCE, R.I.

Editor’s response: I did not know Georgists still existed, and am glad they do. I admire Henry George’s free thinking, and Churchill, as a fighting Liberal in the early 1900s, for taking the trouble to develop a synoptic understanding of George’s theories.

But as the late Labour MP Andrew MacLaren argued in our original article (“The People’s Rights: Opportunity Lost?,” Finest Hour 112:42), by the 1920s George’s “Single Tax” became inadequate as the basis of revenue: “Under the cruel heel of war and unemployment, Britons came to value security more and independence less. The emphasis in social advance shifted to the massive provision of public benefits, and the increasing intervention of the State in almost every area of human activity.” To say this has continued since 1928 would be an understatement.

Churchill in his speech was arguing for “rating relief” (tax reduction) to sorely taxed industries. He was searching for sources of revenue which would better distribute the tax burden, specifically in this case a tax on petrol—no doubt one of his 10,000 new “taxation cases” (cars didn’t exist in 1879). Here’s more of his 1928 speech (Complete Speeches V: 4420-21):

The idea that we could use the rating of site values as a substitute for this powerful, fruitful fiscal engine of the petrol tax is one of the greatest delusions. If we had to enter into a long discussion at present upon site values, that would be the surest way of obstructing all practical creative reform in the direction of the relief of rates on industry, and the rest of this Parliament would be spent in very exciting but utterly sterile arguments on the subject of land values, and on the principles which you should apply to their rating or taxation, and we should not make the slightest progress towards the very solid, serious task we have set ourselves to accomplish. Therefore I do not intend to make more than one general observation upon the question of site values, except to say that it is the best method of stopping the rating relief of industry.

President Reagan once shocked his listeners by suggesting that corporations really don’t pay taxes—they just pass them along to consumers in the form of higher prices. (The United States has the second highest corporate taxes in the industrialized world.) Henry George declared there was no right to untaxed ownership of land, air, water and sunshine (at a time when 400 families owned most of the land in Britain). Well, here I sit working at my computer, which is on a table, mounted on a floor, set in a house, anchored to a foundation, on a parcel of land. And though I pay land taxes, I have difficulty understanding how I could be taxed on the air the computer and I breathe, although I am sure our rulers are working on this. RML
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A political postcard from the collection of James Lancaster, produced by Delittle, Fenwick & Co., York, posted in Rochester, Kent, the birthplace in 1833 of Churchill’s nanny Mrs. Everest. The postmark is 6 May 1906, although the argument depicted dated back two years, to when Churchill left the Conservatives over Free Trade. The “Great Joe” Chamberlain had come out for protective tariffs within the Empire, while Tory leader Arthur Balfour had carefully ridden the fence. Churchill (“All babies look like me”) had made their political lives miserable—so out he went!