Churchill and the French

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200 West Madison Street
Suite 1700, Chicago IL 60606
Tel. (312) 658-6088
info@winstonchurchill.org

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AT THE CHURCHILL WAR ROOMS
King Charles Street, London SW1A 2AQ
Tel. (0207) 766-0122
www.iwm.org.uk/visits/churchill-war-rooms/

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Myth of the “Black Dog”

I couldn’t disagree more with Carol Breckenridge’s “The Myth of the ‘Black Dog’” (FH 155: 28). I have a bit of manic-depression myself, and so do most of my family members. That’s why I’m able to recognize it in Churchill.

The author’s assertion that you can’t be productive if you are manic-depressive is completely absurd. In fact, it’s the exact opposite of the truth. I have a family member with the syndrome who has written over a thousand articles that have been published in medical journals. If anything, we’d probably prefer if he were less productive!

I’d like to see an article providing the counter-argument. Raising awareness about the condition could go a long way to removing the stigma and making it easier for people who need it to get help.

NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST

Ms. Breckenridge replies: It is difficult to tell exactly what in my article you disagree with. I was specific in using the DSM criteria that mental health professionals employ in order to make a bi-polar diagnosis and applying them to what is known about Churchill’s life. One can be anxious but still not qualify for a diagnosis of anxiety disorder, or depressed without a diagnosis of major depression. If I omitted facts about Churchill’s life or got facts wrong, you do not identify them.

I do not wish to suggest that people with bi-polar disorder cannot lead productive lives. Of course they can, and do. Medication now available helps to level out the crushing swing between mania and depression and reduce the extremes in their moods. Churchill however was not simply productive—he was a self-described “glow-worm” of productivity. As a mental health professional I too would like to see the stigma of mental illness removed. I don’t believe the way to do that is by labeling a historic figure like Churchill as having bi-polar disorder when the facts of his life do not fit the DSM criteria.

Myth of the Centre

The Churchill Centre is fundamentally a Churchill adoration society. Mr. Churchill’s views on eugenics and even sterilization of human beings he referred to as “feeble minded,” his abhorrent intolerance of Islam and the Muslim people, his insulting attitude toward Gandhi, his opposition to the independence of the sub-Indian continent [sic], and his constant emphasis on the role of the English-speaking peoples as if the French and Brazilians and Portuguese and Spanish among others cannot and do not play equally important roles, do not receive the attention which they should by the Churchill Centre.

These unfortunate views of his are all quoted in your very own well edited book Churchill in His Own Words, but not popularly discussed either by The Churchill Centre or by Churchill scholars. Nor does it appear that The Churchill Centre wishes to take a look at these very untoward views and ideas. The Churchill Centre shop sells nothing which would indicate to anyone that Mr. Churchill had many flaws, and grievous ones at that, in the respects to which I make mention.

NAME WITHHELD BY EDITOR

Editor’s response: Why Churchill should have cared about the Brazilians and the Portuguese any more than Don Quixote cared about the English eludes us. But perhaps you should read our publications more carefully.

Any organization whose subject is an individual, from Mark Twain to Mickey Mantle, is in the nature of things positive; else why bother to found the organization? Nevertheless, to quote the scholar Paul Addison: “I am glad to see TCC presenting diverse viewpoints. Paradoxically, I always think it diminishes Churchill for him to be regarded as super-human.” And John Ramsden: “TCC has been anxious to foster study of Churchill’s life and significance in the round, rather than simply providing further evidence for the man’s admirers.”
And Warren Kimball: “Finest Hour has come a long way from its cozy origins as a newsy little trivia sheet, replete with hagiography and anecdotes, before it moved toward analytical yet entertaining looks at Churchill and what he did, [taking him] from the clutches of the worshipful and giving him over to the appreciative.”


His remarks on Islam, black South Africans and the Indian sub-continent appeared in Finest Hour long before my book—along with certain other remarks which hardly suggest intolerance:

 “[The Muslim Dervishes] were as brave men as ever walked the earth. The conviction was borne in on me that their claim beyond the grave in respect of a valiant death was not less good than that which any of our countrymen could make” (FH 85). “British government is associated in the Boer farmer’s mind with violent social revolution....the Kaffir is to be declared the brother of the European, to be constituted his legal equal, to be armed with political rights...nor is a tigress robbed of her cubs more furious than is the Boer at this prospect” (FH 105). “Mr. Gandhi has gone very high in my esteem since he stood up for the Untouchables....Tell Mr. Gandhi to use powers that are offered and make the thing a success” (FH 106).

The Churchill Centre shop is run by a dealer who donates a portion of his sales to TCC, but I’m sure that if you could reproduce the famous Nazi papier mache jug, showing a constipated Prime Minister straining over a chamber pot, they’d happily take several dozen.

It is easy to be wise in retrospect. And in retrospect you are wise indeed. Churchill was human. He was a Victorian. He used words like “Kaffir” and “blackamoor” because most people in his time and place did. But he thought more deeply about the nature of man than any comparable figure. Please don’t misrepresent our work by casting it as labors of the worshipful, rather than the appreciative. ☛


This 1800 oil-on-canvas painting represents the Emperor of the French during his glorious period at the beginning of the 19th century. Reproduced is the fourth of five versions of the painting, a “heroic vision” rather more fanciful than real; other artists have depicted a far more practically garbed Napoleon, marching with his troops in the severe Alpine conditions encountered on their way to invade Italy.

All versions are the same image, but in distinct colors. The first version was commissioned by Charles IV, King of Spain, in 1800 to celebrate Spain’s alliance with the Napoleonic Republic. Joseph Bonaparte, when he became the new King of Spain, inherited the painting and took it with him to exile in the United States. It passed eventually to his great-granddaughter Eugénie Bonaparte, who bequeathed it to the national museum of the Château de Malmaison in Rueil-Malmaison on the outskirts of Paris.

As soon as Napoleon heard about the success of the painting he commissioned three new versions. The second version was placed in the Château de Saint-Cloud outside Paris; after the Château was destroyed during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, the painting was removed to the Louvre.

The third version was exhibited in the National Residence of Invalids in Paris but was hidden during the Bourbon Restoration. It was recovered in 1837 by Louis-Philippe I, who placed it in the Historical Museum of the Versailles Palace, where it remains today.

On our cover is the fourth version, created for the Cisalpine Republic, a French client state in northern Italy created by Bonaparte in 1797. A new painting, “Napoleon Giving Life to the Cisalpine Republic,” was originally commissioned, but it was deemed too expensive, so M. David simply painted another version of “Napoleon Crossing the Alps.” Napoleon presented it to the country, by then renamed the Italian Republic, in 1803. In 1816, following Napoleon’s final defeat, the Austrian army confiscated the work. It was first exhibited in 1834 in the Belvedere Palace in Vienna.

The fifth and final version of the painting was painted by M. David for amusement, and remained in his workshop until his death. However, this did not prevent it from traveling as much and more as the four other versions. Its most important appearance was at the Tuileries Palace in Paris after David’s daughter gave it to Napoleon III. A few years later, Napoleon Jerome exhibited it in his Château de Pangrins. The final version wound up at the Museum of the Versailles Palace, the gift of Louis Napoleon, of whom Napoleon Jerome was an ancestor.

The Lion is Back
NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 20TH— “Then out spake brave Horatius, the Captain of the Gate.” William Manchester’s inscription, quoting Macaulay’s Lays of Ancient Rome, a Churchill favorite, on my second volume of his Last Lion, reminds me that Bill was himself for many of us “Captain of the Gate”; and that his death in 2004 bid fair to deprive us of the finale of the most lyrical Churchill work ever written.

Not quite. Twenty-four years on, Little Brown has published the final volume, subtitled Defender of the Realm 1940-1965 (1232 pages, available from the Centre’s New Book Service).

The first two volumes, Visions of Glory 1874-1932 in 1983 and Alone 1932-1940 in 1988, were perhaps the most celebrated popular biographies of our times. More than twenty years in the writing, Volume 3 was completed by Paul Reid, who offers a faithful portrait, positive but not without criticism, particularly revealing on Churchill’s reasoning in his wartime decisions over the Second Front and related topics of Allied grand strategy.

Mr. Reid also did something Mr. Manchester never intended: He extended the book beyond 1945, to a period his predecessor told me was superfluous—a mere coda to the epic Churchill of World War II. Paul Reid pondered this, and decided to take the story to its end, with a little (though not a lot) on WSC’s scintillating performance as leader of the opposition (1945-51), his second premiership (1951-55), and his noble, fruitless quest for a permanent peace.

Churchill himself said, “nothing surpasses 1940.” The book begins here, just after he becomes prime minister, his nation and its Commonwealth alone against the overwhelming might of an undefeated Germany. The Churchill conjured up here is a man of indomitable courage, compelling intellect and an irresistible will to action.

Reid explains how he organized Britain’s defense, worked “to drag America into the war,” and personified the “never surrender” ethos that helped earn the victory; then how he adapted to the postwar shift of world power to the U.S. and confronted the rising threat of the Soviet Union.

Bill Manchester, a Churchill Centre honorary member and twice speaker at international conferences (1986, 1995) was a hugely successful writer with a unique, inspiring style. His books include his memoir of the Pacific War (and personal favorite) Goodbye Darkness; A World Lit Only by Fire; The Glory and the Dream; The Arms of Krupp; American Caesar; and The Death of a President. His vivid descriptions—MacArthur’s valedictory address at West Point, Churchill during the Fall of France (“Another bloody country gone west”), Lee Oswald with his gun in the schoolbook depository at Dallas—will be quoted as long as English is spoken.

Paul Reid of North Carolina, formerly a longtime feature writer for the Palm Beach Post, was an award-winning journalist but, above all, Bill’s friend. In 1998, in the midst of research for Volume 3, Manchester suffered two strokes that left him with mental faculties but the inability to write. In October 2003, shortly before his death, he asked Paul to complete the volume, saying: “I wanted a writer, not a historian.” It was an informal conversation, Mr. Reid recalls, “sealed with a handshake.” Two months before Bill’s death they signed a formal agreement.

Reid completed the research and transformed more than forty tablets of Manchester’s notes, or “clumps” as he called them, to produce Defender of the Realm. He asked a number of people, of which this writer was one, to vet his manuscript, a process that assured him a variety of opinions and reduced the chance of errors of fact that crept into the previous volumes.

His fans will find much of Bill’s trademark narrative pace and cadence in this last installment of a classic: a mesmerizing journey through what Lady Soames once called “The Saga.”

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I HAVE NOTICED THAT WHENEVER A DISTINGUISHED POLITICIAN DECLARES THAT A PARTICULAR QUESTION IS ABOVE PARTY, WHAT HE REALLY MEANS IS THAT EVERYBODY, WITHOUT DISTINCTION OF PARTY, SHALL VOTE FOR HIM....

—WSC, HOUSE OF COMMONS, 8 MARCH 1905
In a flourish suitable to a great work, Paul Reid leaves us on January 30th, 1965 with the best words Lord Moran ever wrote about his celebrated patient:

“The village stations on the way to Bladon were crowded with his countrymen, and at Bladon in a country churchyard, in the stillness of a winter evening, in the presence of his family and a few friends, Winston Churchill was committed to English earth, which in his finest hour he had held inviolate.”

Bill Manchester would like that.

Alamein +70

WELLS, SOMERSET, OCTOBER 25TH—

“Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.”

That is what Winston Churchill told the British people after the Eighth Army had won the battle of El Alamein in November 1942. Jonathan Dimbleby, talking about his new book, Destiny in the Desert, said Churchill made the most of this victory in Egypt because Britain had suffered three years with painfully little success against the Germans and Japanese in the Second World War. (It was Dimbleby’s father, Richard, who recited the poem “At Bladon” as Churchill’s casket was lowered into the grave on 30 January 1965. See FH 152 back cover.)

In these islands, Alamein rose to the height of Blenheim and Trafalgar in the pantheon of great military successes, but many historians and Russian dictator Joseph Stalin saw the whole North African campaign as merely a sideshow in the war. Jonathan Dimbleby, whose father reported from the Middle East for the BBC, argues pitifully that the North African campaign played a crucial part in securing the Allied victory in 1945.

By persuading the Americans that the Allies should drive the Italians and Germans out of North Africa before invading France, Churchill saved the British Empire and prevented the 1944 D-Day landings from being launched prematurely and disastrously in 1942 or 1943. This was achieved, Dimbleby explained, despite Americans thinking the Empire should be broken up.

Italy’s dictator Benito Mussolini wanted to revive the Roman Empire and regarded the Mediterranean as an Italian lake, so in 1940 he invaded Egypt, an essential pivot of the British Empire because of the Suez Canal, from his colony of Libya. Mussolini said he needed only “a few thousand dead so I can sit at the peace conference as a man who fought” and claim a share of the territorial spoils. However, his generals and soldiers showed less enthusiasm and Hitler sent seasoned German troops under his star general, Rommel, to bolster his failing Italian allies.

Rommel achieved remarkable success with small forces until British General Montgomery sent him into full-scale retreat from Alamein, which is only fifty miles from Cairo. Then the allies were able to invade what Churchill called “the soft underbelly of Europe” and knock Italy out of the war.

Dimbleby said the underbelly was not that soft, but the Italian front took German troops away from the crucial Eastern, and later the Western, front after D-Day.

—PHILIP WELCH, BBC

FH’s opinion: We are not sure the North Africa campaign “saved the British Empire,” which was probably doomed before the war. See “Churchill and the Western Desert Campaign,” FH 128, Autumn 2005.

More Churchillian Drift

THE WEB, OCTOBER 20TH— Browsing boardofwisdom.com and searching for Winston Churchill, we found that this site’s top ten Churchill quotes, and about twenty-five of its top thirty, comprised words he never said. We believe this is something of a record, though >>
Handing the Nazis

LONDON, OCTOBER 26TH—Churchill wanted Nazi leaders executed or imprisoned without trial instead of going through the Nuremberg war crimes tribunals, according to wartime diaries declassified today. At Yalta, Roosevelt and Stalin talked him out of it. The British agreed to trials despite fears they could set a dangerous example.

The declassified 1940s-50s diary was by ex-MI5 head of counter-espionage Guy Liddell, who backed a plan to “bump off” certain Nazis, while others should receive varying terms of imprisonment, at the discretion of “any military body finding these individuals in their area.” The plan, Liddell wrote, was code named WALLFLOWERS: “Winston had put this forward at Yalta but Roosevelt felt that the Americans would want a trial. Joe supported Roosevelt on the perfectly frank ground that the Russians liked public trials for propaganda purposes. It seems to me that we are just being dragged down to the level of the travesties of justice that have been taking place in the USSR for the past twenty years.”

A year later Mr. Liddell flew to Nuremberg to witness twenty-one senior Nazis prosecuted, and felt his concerns about a show trial had been confirmed, the Guardian reported. “One cannot escape the feeling that most of the things the twenty-one are accused of having done over a period of fourteen years, the Russians have done over a period of twenty-eight years,” Liddell wrote in his diary, objecting to the “somewhat phoney atmosphere of the whole proceedings.” The accused included Hermann Goering, commander of the Luftwaffe; Admiral Karl Donitz, Hitler’s successor; and Hitler’s architect, Albert Speer.

Nuremberg was described by the British president of the tribunal, Justice Geoffrey Lawrence, as “unique in the history of the jurisprudence of the world and of supreme importance to millions of people.” Liddell was concerned that the court was conducted “by victors who have framed their own charter, their own procedure and their own rules of evidence in order to deal with the vanquished.” (More on the National Archives website http://xrl.us/bnv79q.)

FH’s opinion: Churchill’s view is not new. He remarked to Ismay during the Nuremberg Trials that it was a good thing they had won, lest it be they standing in the dock, and voiced his doubts in Parliament about mass-prosecutions: “We are told that thousands yet remain to be tried, and that vast categories of Germans are classed as potentially guilty because of their association with the Nazi regime. After all, in a country which is handled as Germany was, the ordinary people have very little choice about what to do. I think some consideration should always be given to ordinary people” (12 November 1946).

His well-known opinions have already led shallow thinkers to mistake his characteristic magnanimity as a kind of forgiveness toward the Nazis who were “only following orders”—which any serious student of Churchill would know to be impossible. It would be unfortunate if this new material were added to previous “evidence” that Churchill went squishy over Nazis.

“The Nuremberg trials are over,” he said in his Commons speech, “and the guilty leaders of the Nazi regime have been hanged by the conquerors.” The enemy had been defeated, other challenges were now at hand: what Churchill sought was closure.

India Warnings Recalled

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 22ND—“It’s disheartening that present-day Indian politicians have made Winston Churchill’s fears about independent India come true,” writes Tarlok Singh. “Today, as Churchill had predicted more than six decades ago, power has gone into the hands of rogues, politicians are fighting among themselves for power, and India is lost in political squabbles. The country’s image in the world is taking a severe beating thanks to the various scams in which several of our politicians are allegedly involved.”

As Manfred Weidhorn wrote many years ago, Churchill was right in the specifics about India but wrong on the broader questions. He did not accept (until much later) that Indians preferred to be governed by their own rascals. Nevertheless it is heartening to read, as before in these pages, that a broader view of Churchill is being taken by Indians willing to look beyond everyday headlines and pat summaries, which regret Churchill to the role of a stubborn reactionary John Bull.

Those Vanishing National Anthems

LONDON, OCTOBER 23RD—An article by this author in Finest Hour 111 contained all the verses of the British, Australian, Canadian and American national anthems, asking, “Do children even know the words?”
Robert Hardy is to play Winston Churchill for the ninth time in his career, opposite Dame Helen Mirren’s Queen Elizabeth II, in the West End.

Peter Morgan’s new play, The Audience, begins at the Gielgud Theatre on February 15th, running eight times a week through mid-June. It depicts the weekly meetings between the Queen and her twelve prime ministers from Churchill to David Cameron. Haydn Gwynne will play Margaret Thatcher, while Paul Ritter will play John Major.

Timothy Robert Hardy has previously played Churchill eight times, including Winston Churchill: The Wilderness Years and, most recently, Celui qui a dit non in Paris (in French). He played Siegfried Farnon in the classic television adaptation of James Herriot’s All Creatures Great and Small and is also known for starring in the Harry Potter films as Minister of Magic Cornelius Fudge.

Directed by Stephen Daldry, The Audience marks a return to royal duty for Dame Helen, who won an Oscar for her role in The Queen (2006), also written by Morgan.

Tim Hardy tells us he’s had a “bit of a go round” with the producers over his role: “The script suggests that WSC tended to bully the young Queen. Of course we know that’s not true.” He’s quite right, as we quickly agreed—during Churchill’s weekly visits to Her Majesty, courtiers would hear peals of laughter coming from behind the closed doors at the audience room.

“It is rather an odd assignment,” continues our honorary member: “I’m 87 and Churchill in 1952 was only 78—I’ll have to play it backward.” Tim Hardy is the youngest 87-year-old we know. If anything, his ninth edition of Winston Churchill will be too young!

“Nine is my lucky number,” he tells us. Well, we think he should make it ten.

*****

“No one should be surprised to hear that the White House might be haunted, given its history and age,” writes the San Jose, California Mercury News. “Glimpses of President Abraham Lincoln’s ghost top the list (he’s been spotted by everyone from Winston Churchill to Gerald Ford’s daughter Susan) and visitors have also reported seeing Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson and first ladies Abigail Adams and Dolley Madison. Even William Henry Harrison, president for a mere month, still hangs out at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue from time to time. He’s said to haunt the attic.”

We’ve scoured our references for Churchill’s encounter with the ghost of Honest Abe, coming up blank. Can any reader assist?

Now Sir Winston’s grandson, the Conservative MP Nicholas Soames, wants learning the words of God Save the Queen to be a compulsory part of the national curriculum. Mr. Soames is joined by a television presenter, Liberal Democrat peer Floella Benjamin, who called for pupils to sing the national anthem at the start of each day—something, as our article recalled, that was de rigueur when we went to school, two or three centuries ago.

Mr. Soames told the Mail Online that learning the words is a vital part of being British, if the government is serious about encouraging a sense of citizenship: “I think it is very important that all schoolchildren in Great Britain are taught the national anthem. I am absolutely amazed that they are not. I think people would be surprised if they knew that people who live in this country do not know the words of the anthem. It is extraordinary that the government bangs on about citizenship and then are completely ambivalent about whether or not people know the national anthem. I think it should be compulsory…As one cannot rely on parents to teach anyone anything these days, it is something schools should do.”

Responding to Mr. Soames’s parliamentary question on the matter, Undersecretary of State for Education and Child Care Liz Truss replied: “It is a matter for individual schools.”

Mr. Soames responded: “I don’t think [that] is good enough. I can see some bolshy left-wing head teacher refusing to teach the national anthem….we do now live in a very diverse nation and our unwritten constitution and everything that goes with it—the church, the crown, the law—if we are going to teach that which we must if people are going to love the country, they should know the national anthem.”

Mr. Soames then raised the matter personally with Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove. A spokesman for Gove said: “Michael thinks this is a fantastic idea and supports what Nicholas is saying [but] ultimately this is up to local schools to decide.”

Which is exactly what Ms. Truss was saying, which Mr. Soames said was not good enough.

Sleepless in Azerbaijan

MEXICO CITY, NOVEMBER 15TH—Surrounded by flowers and palm trees off Mexico City’s main avenue, the statue of Heydar Aliyev, Azerbaijan’s >>
Datelines

Late leader, looks peaceful enough in Mexico-Azerbaijani Friendship Park, on a corner of the noisy and polluted capital. But rights activists are forcing the city to move it to a less prominent indoor location.

A plaque on the bronze statue describes Aliyev, a former KGB man, as “a shining example of infinite devotion to the homeland and loyalty to the universal ideals of world peace.” He led Azerbaijan to independence from the Soviet Union, but critics call him a strongman who stifled dissent and jailed opponents in 1993-2003, after which his son Ilham succeeded him.

Aliyev seems a little out of place in a city that boasts statues of revered figures like Gandhi, Churchill and Martin Luther King. A Mexican named Isabel Aguilar tweeted: “If they put up a statue of Aliyev… I propose that they put one of Kim Jong-il or Vladimir Putin.”

A special relationship has existed since Mexico was one of the first nations to recognize Azerbaijani independence. But the Azerbaijani government is sleepless over the fact that it paid around $5 million to refurbish Mexico-Azerbaijan Friendship Park, and Mexico City’s removal of the Aliyev statue suggests that they consider asking for the return of their donation.

“It’s well cared for, very peaceful. I like it, but to tell you the truth I don’t know him,” Armando Monroy, a 45-year-old messenger, said after listening to music on one of the iron benches. The statue’s presence “is strange,” he said. “He’s not known like Gandhi.”

We know little about the sins or virtues of Heydar Aliyev, but we are happy there is no controversy in Mexico City over the statue of Sir Winston.

More forgeries

Milford-on-Sea, Hampshire, October 28th—The signatures of Churchill, T.S. Eliot, Tolkien, Wilder, Huxley and Stevenson were forged for profit in eBay scams by Milford resident Allan Formhals, 66, who was found guilty of eight offences of fraud by misrepresentation and two offences of possessing articles for use in fraud. Formhals would purchase large quantities of unsigned books for just a few pounds before selling them on as “signed” by the famous authors.

An investigation revealed he would offer a signed book for sale on eBay before building up a relationship with the buyer and then sell large quantities of books and memorabilia to unsuspecting victims. Formhals was arrested at his home where police found large quantities of books bearing forged signatures. Books with thousands of “practice” signatures were also found, along with a calligraphy pen and ink. Formhals purchased unsigned books for a pittance, releasing them onto the market bearing forged signatures and fake provenance, at vast mark-ups. Police recovered more than 100 forgeries, but believe many more were sold to unsuspecting buyers: “We would ask dealers to be vigilant when trading in books signed by the authors listed above.” Formhals was remanded on bail and will be sentenced on December 21.

—Daily Mail

Errata

FH 155: 6, column 4 first full paragraph: for “underestimate” read “overestimate.” FH 154: 43: The quotation referred to should be “houses and meat...” (not “red meat...” etc.).
Update: Churchill at Bletchley

Lucy Lester

Give them whatever they need. This was the jist of an Action This Day memo by Churchill about the work of the now famous code-breakers at Bletchley Park during the Second World War. (See our “Churchill and Intelligence” issue, FH 149, Winter 2010-11.) Winston Churchill’s unstinting support of the secret work carried out by over 8000 people played a major part in their success in cracking the German coded messages and shortening World War II.

Visitors to Bletchley Park these days come to a sign saying “Churchill Room.” As they enter, almost everyone gasps. To their amazement, this very large room is filled to capacity with Churchill memorabilia.

The gentleman who usually greets them here is a smiling Ulsterman, Jack Darrah, who with his late wife Rita amassed this collection over forty years. “This is my private collection and it is just a hobby,” Jack modestly says. “Please ask me any questions.”

Jack inherited his lifetime admiration of Winston Churchill from his father. His first Churchillian possession was a first edition of Churchill’s only novel, Savrola, published in 1900. Since 1947 Jack has collected letters, photos, newspaper cuttings and paintings, to name just a few of the many thousand items displayed. His efforts meant that he had to travel far and wide, places as far off as Vancouver, Calgary, Venice and Alaska.

In 1992 Jack and Rita retired to live in a “granny flat” in Buckinghamshire. One day in 1993, while visiting Bletchley Park, they stopped to admire a bust of Winston Churchill displayed in the famous cryptology centre. A member of the Bletchley Park Trust spoke to Jack, who knew the sculptor. The conversation resulted in Jack bringing his own collection to put on display at Bletchley Park.

One of the striking exhibits is a scale model of the MV Havengore, the Thames motor vessel that carried Sir Winston’s coffin, and members of his family, from Tower Pier to Festival Pier after the funeral at St. Paul’s Cathedral. On Remembrance Day, 11 November 2010, Jack was invited by Havengore’s owner, Chris Ryland, to travel down the Thames on board. They moored opposite Big Ben and observed the two-minute silence at 11 a.m., as the bugler on board played Reveille and The Last Post. (This was repeated in 2011.)

Bletchley Park is within walking distance of the local railroad station and easily accessible by train from Euston, as well as by road. After a tour with one of the excellent guides, you may browse Jack’s magnificent collection at leisure—a fitting tribute to the leader who referred to Bletchley’s team of intrepid code-breakers as “my geese that laid the golden eggs and never cackled.”
**Riddles Mysteries Enigmas**

*Q* The Italian newspaper *Repubblica*, reporting the auction of Churchill’s dentures, say that the prosthesis wasn’t perfect, in order to maintain his typical speech defect. Is this true? (2) Did Churchill ever drink beer? A video from the Cairo Conference shows him drinking from a glass filled with an amber liquid. Do you know what it was? — *Patrizio Giangreco, Naples*

**A** Churchill had a lisp which he turned into a feature of his oratory. He acquired dentures early, like most of his generation, but found that soft dentures would preserve the lisp, which he desired to keep! See *Dentures, FH 138: 11-12.* (2) The amber liquid was probably his usual weak whisky and water (or soda). Sir John Colville said he would nurse a glass for hours, but with little whisky it was “like scotch-flavoured mouthwash.” But there were occasions when he drank beer. Sometimes it was with troops or sailors.

His 1905-15 private secretary, Eddie Marsh, described a 1914 trip to Europe by Churchill and his wife: “On arrival in Venice they went sightseeing in a gondola. Some days later they visited the palace of Diocletian at Spoleto (Split), and drank beer under giant plane-trees at Ragusa (Dubrovnik).” Maurice Ashley, Churchill’s chief literary assistant in the 1930s, wrote that when they met, Churchill (then in his fifties), said he always drank beer for his lunch: “Beef and beer, once the British breakfast, were long his staples in the middle of the day.” It doesn’t seem that this lasted long, however; most often he is had white wine or champagne at lunch.

*Q* At the Morgan Library’s “Power of Words” exhibition I was astounded to read the Abraham Lincoln comments that President Roosevelt gave Mr. Churchill on his 70th birthday. As I was not able to copy the words in the document, I hope you can point me to the full text and its history, because no catalog was available. — *Maxine Arnstein, via email*

**A** The original document at Chartwell was loaned to the exhibition. FDR’s 70th birthday present to Churchill, which now survives at Chartwell, is pictured below by courtesy of the National Trust:

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*LEFT: “If I were trying to read, much less answer all the attacks made on me, this shop might well be closed for any other business. I do the best I know how, the very best I can, and I mean to keep on doing it to the end. If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me will not amount to anything. If the end brings me out all wrong, ten angels swearing I was right would make no difference. [Signed] A. Lincoln.”

INSCRIBED BELOW: “For Winston on his Birthday; I would go even to Teheran to be with him again. Franklin Roosevelt, Nov. 30 1944.”*
For more than thirty years in peace and war I have marched with you,” Churchill told the French in 1940.... “je marche encore avec vous aujourd’hui, sur la même route.” He loved France with the passion of a Frenchman. Napoleon was his hero, Clemenceau his epitome in the Great War, de Gaulle his embodiment of France in World War II, the south of France his refuge in old age. In boyhood he wrote of “fair Alsace and forlorn Lorraine,” having learned of France’s greatest tragedy (up to then), at his father’s knee. In 1947 he recalled those impressions in a short story about the return of Lord Randolph, half a century after his death.

“I remember,” his father says in The Dream, “taking you through the Place de la Concorde when you were only nine years old, and you asked me about the Strasbourg monument. You wanted to know why this one was covered in flowers and crepe. I told you about the lost provinces of France. What flag flies in Strasbourg now?”

“The Tricolour flies there,” Winston tells him, and Lord Randolph says, “Ah, so they won. They had their revanche. That must have been a great triumph for them.” “It cost them their life blood,” Winston replies sadly—to a father who does not know of the two World Wars.

Allen Packwood answers many questions herein on Churchill’s infatuation with Napoleon. Though WSC did call him an “ogre,” modern historians were far more scathing. Bonaparte, said one, was “less a great strategist or defender of liberty, than an opportunist and a mafia godfather”; others compared him to Hitler.

Churchill would not have it: “I always hate to compare Napoleon with Hitler, as it seems an insult to the great Emperor and warrior to connect him in any way with a squallid caucus boss and butcher.” His generation, French and British alike, was steeped in Napoleonic myth, Allen Packwood explains. Yet Churchill recognized Napoleon’s flaws as a warlord, one of which he shared with Hitler: “Both these men were temperamentally unable to give up the tiniest scrap of any territory to which the high watermark of their hectic fortunes had carried them.”

Least known among the trio of Frenchmen discussed herein is Pierre Flandin, who had, Richard Marsh writes, much to recommend him—and was rewarded when, on trial for his life, Churchill’s testimony saved him.

Foreign Minister Flandin came to London after Hitler occupied the Rhineland, desperate for British support in a French action to throw the Germans out—and ran headlong into an intransigent Prime Minister. Flandin’s oratory at that hour was Churchillian: “Today the whole world, and especially the small nations, turn their eyes toward England. If England will act now, she can lead Europe.”

But England would not act. “You may be right,” Stanley Baldwin told him, “but if there is even one chance in a hundred that war would follow from your police operation, I have not the right to commit England.”

A despairing Flandin returned to France, certain that inaction now meant war later. His effort to stop Hitler was greater at that time than that of Churchill, who never forgot that Flandin had tried to prevent “the unnecessary war.”

The relationship between Churchill and de Gaulle has occupied these pages often, and whole books have been written on it. The subject will never be closed, but herein we offer the conclusions of an undergraduate, Natalie Rosseau, who took up the subject with no preconceptions.

Ms. Rosseau deftly separates the wheat from the chaff, culling out the famous, furious, often comic encounters of de Gaulle and Churchill to focus on what really matters—and what both knew of each other in the end. “L’homme du destin,” Churchill said of de Gaulle....

“Here is the Constable of France.” And after WSC’s funeral in 1965 de Gaulle wrote: “Dans le grand drame, il fut le plus grand.” (In the great drama, he was the greatest.)

It was Churchill’s and France’s destiny to be “somewhat mixed up together” for half a century; to share glory and anguish, triumph and tragedy, and the greatest of victories. “Dieu protège la France,” he told them in 1940. “Never will I believe that the soul of France is dead.... Rappelle-vous de quelle façon Napoléon disait avant une de ses victoires: ‘Ces mêmes Prussiens qui sont aujourd’hui si vantards étaient à 3 contre 1 à Jena et à 6 contre 1 à Montmirail.’” (Remember how Napoleon said before one of his battles: “These same Prussians who are so boastful today were three to one at Jena, and six to one at Montmirail.”)

It was Sir Martin Gilbert who drew to Allen Packwood’s attention a tactful omission in that famous peroration: Napoleon said those words to his Marshals just before Waterloo. Perhaps the irony was intended.
A Tale of Two Statesmen

CHURCHILL AND NAPOLEON

“The Greatest Man of Action Ever Known to Human Records” —WSC

“The Caption read: “Mr. Winston Churchill (late Minister of War by Land and Sea):

‘Of course my true genius is bellicose; but if they insist on my representing
my country at the Washington Conference I must make the sacrifice.”’

A disarmament conference was duly held in Washington, but the Colonial Secretary did not attend.
There are numerous parallels in the careers of Churchill and the great Emperor he admired. Separated by a century, both began their careers in the army. Napoleon Bonaparte was the young artillery officer who captured Toulon for the French Revolutionary Government in 1793. Winston Churchill was the Victorian cavalry officer who famously charged the Derivishes with the 21st Lancers at the Battle of Omdurman in 1898, and who was brought to national, if not international, prominence by his escape from Boer captivity in 1899.

Both enjoyed spectacular early successes. Napoleon gained command of the Artillery of the Army of Italy aged just twenty-four, and within two years was commanding the French Army of the Interior and then the Army of Italy, leading his troops to spectacular victories against Austria and even into an occupation of Egypt and an invasion of Palestine. In November 1799, in a spectacular coup d’état, he made himself First Consul. He was only thirty-five in December 1804 when he famously crowned himself Emperor of the French.

Some of Churchill’s critics vested him with Napoleonic ambitions, though he didn’t rise to quite that level. But Churchill was elected to Parliament in 1900; became a Cabinet minister in 1908, aged just thirty-three; and was not yet forty when, as First Lord of the Admiralty he headed the largest navy in the world at the outbreak of the First World War. These were young men in a hurry, operating on a global stage.

Napoleon undoubtedly got out of the blocks first, establishing himself as the arbiter of Europe and the breaker of the ancien régime. In a series of spectacular campaigns he humbled the mighty Austrian and Russian Empires, destroyed the remnants of the Holy Roman Empire, invaded Spain, and even contemplated an invasion of Britain. His brothers were established as puppet kings, and France was remodelled in his image with the introduction of Napoleonic institutions of law and government. It is fair to say that his style of lightning warfare and his great victories at Marengo, Hohenlinden, Ulm, Austerlitz, Jena and Wagram shook and shaped the 19th century world.

By comparison, Churchill’s career proved more problematic. There was the setback of losing office over the Dardanelles crisis, almost exactly 100 years after Napoleon met his own final defeat. Churchill came back, serving in many high offices, only to be eclipsed again in his Wilderness Years of the 1930s. These were famously overcome, and perhaps they gave him a sense of perspective that Napoleon never had.

It is also right to point out that Churchill willingly accepted the constraints of a Parliamentary system, while Napoleon deliberately swept aside all limitations on his own power and actions. Ultimately, however, on 10 May 1940, Churchill like Napoleon walked with destiny, and assumed the heavy burden of the premiership at a moment of supreme national crisis.

Thus both men led their countries in time of war, becoming in the process iconic figures, inextricably linked to questions of national identity and honour. The British bulldog and the glory of France both remain the subject of intense popular and academic scrutiny and interest. Of course, Napoleon ultimately led his Empire and armies to defeat at the hands of a European coalition, while Churchill helped build and lead a global coalition to victory against a European despot. It is true that Churchill was defeated in the 1945 general election, but he returned to play a role on the world stage and ended his career with a second term as prime minister, lauded with the Order of the Garter, a Nobel Prize, and honorary American citizenship. Napoleon also attempted a comeback, but his 100-day return ended with defeat on the battlefield of Waterloo and his exile on the island of St. Helena.

The comparisons are interesting, but can we trace more direct connections from one man to the other? They shared a common influence, in that both studied the 18th century campaigns of Churchill’s ancestor, the first Duke of Marlborough. More significantly, Napoleon exerted a potent influence on the thinking and writings of Sir Winston Churchill.

In my office at the Churchill Archives Centre is a bust of the Duke of Wellington. It did not belong to Churchill, but was given to me by a French gentleman who saw service as a young soldier during the Second World War—an admirer of Churchill and de Gaulle, and an Anglophile. He presented this bust so that he could stand next to it when Lady Thatcher visited the Archives Centre in 2002, to open the new wing that was to house her papers, and say to her, “An Iron Duke for an Iron Lady”—which he did.

Why do I mention this? Because he was a French admirer of Wellington. You might expect Churchill, given his lineage and training as a cavalry officer, to be firmly on Wellington’s side, but the truth is that he was the opposite: an Englishman who admired Napoleon.

On 8 April 1936, over seventy-six years ago, Churchill wrote a review of a play for the Daily Mail. Entitled St. Helena, it was about the final days of Bonaparte in lonely exile. WSC could not have been more enthusiastic...
entitling his piece, “Napoleon Lives Again in ‘St. Helena.’” His concluding paragraph reveals his deep knowledge of the subject. Wellington, he writes, had himself stayed on St. Helena on his way back from India, in the very same house, “The Briars,” where the French Emperor was later forcibly accommodated. Churchill uses that fact to make an observation which reveals his true feelings about these two great military figures:

Even the fame of Wellington who had slept at “The Briars” on his way from India is lessened, and his stature limited when he could write to Admiral Malcolm, “Tell Boney that I find his apartments at L’Elysée-Bourbon very comfortable, and that I hope that he likes mine at ‘The Briars’ as much.” The victor of Waterloo should have had a truer sense of proportion.1

Napoleon may have been “a military tyrant, a conqueror, a man of order and discipline, a man of mundane ambitions and overwhelming egotism,” Churchill continues, “but his grandeur defied misfortune and rises superior even to time.”

The bust on Churchill’s own desk was of Napoleon. Churchill was a lifelong fan. In 1920 he was prepared to accept a place on the Honorary Committee for the Centenary of Napoleon’s death.2 Enter “Napoleon” into our electronic catalogue of the Churchill Papers and you get back fifty-two relevant entries. These show Churchill purchasing and collecting books on the Emperor from at least 1909, and continuing into the 1930s. His large collection, much of it in French, survives at Churchill College, having been given by his widow Clementine, along with one autograph Napoleon manuscript.

It is pretty clear that Churchill was collecting with a sense of purpose, and that he intended to write a book about Napoleon, perhaps the one great book that he did not get round to producing. In January 1932 he told Robert Ballon that he would write a 5000-word introduction to Ballon’s Napoleon book on condition that he had the right to re-use any of the ideas or phrases “as he might one day write a book on the subject.” In April Stanley Baldwin sent Churchill a card from the Hostellerie de la Poste at Avallon, where Napoleon had stayed on his return from Elba, suggesting that Churchill might like to stay there when he began the biography.3

While he never wrote the book, Churchill regularly used his speeches and writings to place his views on Napoleon firmly on the record, and beyond any shadow of doubt or misinterpretation. In September 1944 he nailed his colours to the mast when he said in the British House of Commons, “I always hate to compare Napoleon with Hitler, as it seems an insult to the great Emperor and warrior to connect him in any way with a squalid caucus boss and butcher.” Book IX of his The Age of Revolution, Volume 3 of A History of the English-Speaking Peoples, drafted in the 1930s and finally published in the 1950s, is entitled simply “Napoleon.” It is clear from the text that he sees this non-English-speaker as central to the story of the English-speaking nations. In his 1936 review Churchill had described Bonaparte as “the greatest man of action ever known to human records.” In his book he leavens this to “the greatest man of action born in Europe since Julius Caesar”—still considerable. Churchill reflects at the end:

The impetus of the French Revolution had been spread by the genius of Napoleon to the far quarters of Europe. Ideals of liberty and nationalism, born in Paris, had been imparted to all the European peoples. In the nineteenth century ahead they were to clash resoundingly with the ordered world for which the Congress of Vienna had striven. If France was defeated and her Emperor fallen, the principles which had
inspired her lived on. They were to play a notable part in changing the shape of government in every European country, Britain not excepted.¹⁴

This view is markedly different from that of many more recent British historians. Correlli Barnett, writing in 1978, paints the French Emperor not as a great strategist or defender of liberty, but as an opportunist and a mafia godfather. Andrew Roberts, comparing him to Wellington in 2001, sees Bonaparte as a master propagandist and cultivator of his own myth, while Paul Johnson paints him as the architect of modern total warfare and the precursor of Hitler and Stalin.⁵ Compare to Churchill’s assessment these passages from Paul Johnson’s biography:

The First World War itself was total warfare of the type Bonaparte’s methods adumbrated, and in the political anarchy that emerged from it, a new brand of ideological dictator took Bonaparte’s methods of government as a model, first in Russia, then in Italy, and finally in Germany, with many smaller countries following suit. The totalitarian state of the 20th century was the ultimate progeny of the Napoleonic reality and myth.

Johnson’s conclusion on Napoleon and his legacy is almost diametrically opposed to Churchill’s: “We have to learn again the central lesson of history: that all forms of greatness, military and administrative, nation and empire-building, are as nothing—indeed are perilous in the extreme—without a humble and a contrite heart.”⁶

Why did Churchill hold Bonaparte in such high regard? Firstly, we must remember that Winston Churchill was educated and steeped in a different historical tradition. It is easy for us to forget that Napoleon was venerated in his own lifetime and immediately after, not just by the French but also by British politicians, writers and poets. As an historian Churchill stood in the British liberal Whig tradition. The Whigs had originally welcomed the French Revolution, and hailed Napoleon as the modernising force that had swept away old tyrannies and established a new Europe based more on law and liberty. The French Emperor was celebrated by the romantic poets, and immortalised in the hagiographic biographies that form a large part of Churchill’s own collection.

To Thomas Carlyle, writing in 1841, Napoleon may have had a fatal moral flaw but he was nonetheless the “true Democrat” and “our last Great Man.” To Walter Scott he was the epitome of fallen greatness; to the American writer Emerson he was the archetype of the self-made man.⁷ All those who lived through the Napoleonic years, whatever their political persuasion, acknowledged his greatness. To the Whig politician Lord Holland he was “the greatest statesman and the ablest general of ancient or modern times,” and even the Tory politician Lord Canning was prepared to acknowledge “the superiority of his talent” and “the dazzling ascendancy of his genius.”⁸ As a soldier and a student of military history, as a romantic who lived for >>

**“We are told that Herr Hitler has a plan for invading the British Isles. This has often been thought of before. When Napoleon lay at Boulogne for a year with his flat-bottomed boats and his Grand Army, he was told by someone: ‘There are bitter weeds in England.’ There are certainly a great many more of them since the British Expeditionary Force returned.” —WSC, 1940**
“Is it really true that a seven-mile cross-country run is enforced upon all in this division, from generals to privates?...Who is the general of this division, and does he run the seven miles himself? If so, he may be more useful for football than war. Could Napoleon have run seven miles across country at Austerlitz? Perhaps it was the other fellow he made run.” —WSC, 1941

CHURCHILL AND NAPOLEON...

great men and great events, and as a Victorian brought up in a society steeped in the cult of Napoleon, Churchill was naturally drawn to the story of this amazing man.

Secondly, we must remember that Churchill was a Francophile. It is easy to forget that France is the country that Churchill visited more than any other; more even than the United States (for all the talk and writings on the Special Relationship). From grumpy adolescent to benign elder statesman, it is to France that Churchill came to relax, to paint, to drink his favourite wines, to enjoy life. He had a faith in France and in its military glory: a faith nurtured by his study of Napoleon and a belief that he maintained even in France’s darkest hour.

Meeting with Premier Reynaud and the failing French leadership for the final time at Tours on 13 June 1940, “Mr. Churchill said that this was certainly the darkest hour for the Allied cause. Nevertheless his confidence that Hitlerism would be smashed and that Nazidom could and would not over-rule Europe remained absolutely unshaken.” Four days later France agreed to an armistice. The truth was that the cause was already lost. But this is not the note on which events were to end. Speaking in the House of Commons on 2 August 1944 Churchill said:

For forty years I have been a consistent friend of France and her brave army; all my life I have been grateful for the contribution France has made to the culture and glory of Europe, and above all for the sense of personal liberty and the rights of man which has radiated from the soul of France. But these are not matters of sentiment or personal feeling. It is one of the main interests of Great Britain that a friendly France should reign and hold her place among the major powers of Europe and the world. Show me a moment when I swerved from this conception, and you shall show me a moment when I have been wrong.

Thirdly, Churchill saw in Napoleon a man of action, ability, energy and dynamism: a force of nature that he could admire and—in some respects—seek to emulate.

Napoleon did not suffer from modesty or lack of ambition. Andrew Roberts in his book has some wonderful Napoleon quotes, such as: “At twenty-nine years of age I

have exhausted everything. It only remains for me to become a complete egoist”; and: “In war men are nothing: it is a man who is everything”; and finally: “Nobody has conceived anything great in our century: it falls to my lot to give the example.”

This is monumental egoism. Churchill’s ego was never in the same league, but he was ambitious and shared a faith in his star. This after all is the young man who apparently told Violet Bonham Carter that, “We are all worms. But I do believe I am a glow-worm.” From the Indian North West Frontier he wrote to his mother, Lady Randolph Churchill, on 5 September 1897 before going into battle:

As to fighting—we march tomorrow, and before a week is out, there will be a battle—probably the biggest yet fought on the frontier this year. By the time this reaches you everything will be over so that I do not mind writing about it. I have faith in my star—that is that I am intended to do something in the world. If I am mistaken—what does it matter? My life has been a pleasant one and though I should regret to leave it—it would be a regret that perhaps I should never know.

Years later as a war leader, he led his administration with the motto “Action this Day” and famously declared of himself, “I am certainly not one of those who need to be prodded. In fact, if anything I am a prod.”

These quotes touch on a bigger truth, one that I believe clarifies the real Churchillian interest in Napoleon. For Churchill, like Napoleon, believed in the ability of men to shape their own destiny, and consequently in the power of great men to achieve great things. He did not subscribe to a world view which relegated the actions of men to outside causes, whether divinely pre-ordained or dictated by economics, class or race. He spent his life writing, speaking and leading the charge against totalitarian systems that espoused such views. To Churchill, Napoleon was proof that man could rise above his background and his environment, and, to go back to the quote I gave earlier, prove himself “superior even to time.”

Clearly from his own writings, Churchill was not an uncritical admirer. Quite the contrary, I believe that Churchill’s penetrating study of Napoleon, his life
and his campaigns, informed his own views and actions. He was certainly able to invoke Napoleon at key moments. Let me give you a couple of good examples:

In 1915, in the midst of the First World War, the relationship between First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill and Admiral Lord Fisher, his First Sea Lord—respectively the political head and service chief of the Royal Navy—broke down over the failure of an operation to use ships to force passage of the Dardanelles Straits. The argument was conducted through an exchange of dramatic letters that survive in our archive.

Fisher was always an eccentric correspondent, favouring a strong use of quotations and underlinings to emphasize his points. On 5 April he wrote to Churchill complaining about the amount of time that was being used up on the Dardanelles operation: “D—m the Dardanelles! They’ll be our grave!” and ending, “We could have had the Greeks & everyone else at the right time but we are ‘too late’ ALWAYS! This war might be described as ‘Procrastinations—vacillations—Antwerps.’ (That’s copyright!).”

How did Churchill respond? Three days later, on April 8th, Churchill wrote out a note in his own hand for Fisher, expressing his dissatisfaction with a paper that Fisher had sent him advocating delaying the Dardanelles operation or replacing it with a smaller show of force against Haifa. Fisher’s perceived lack of resolution led Churchill to produce his red pen, quoting Napoleon:

“We are defeated at sea because our Admirals have learned—where I know not—that war can be made without running risks.”

My second example comes from the Second World War. On 21 October 1940 Churchill broadcast a message on the BBC to the people of occupied France: “Frenchmen—rearm your spirits before it is too late. Remember how Napoleon said before one of his battles: ‘These same Prussians who are so boastful today were three to one at Jena, and six to one at Montmirail.’ Never will I believe that the soul of France is dead. Never will I believe that her place amongst the greatest nations of the world has been lost for ever!”

Stirring words! I am grateful to Sir Martin Gilbert for pointing out to me that what Churchill tactfully omits to tell his French audience is that Napoleon said these words to his Marshals immediately before his defeat at Waterloo. But, as I hinted above, Churchill did not just quote Napoleon; he also learned from him.

What defeated Bonaparte? In the end he was brought down by British dominance of the seas, by an Allied coalition, by a war of attrition in Spain, and by huge losses in Russia. What was the strategy that Churchill pursued against Nazi Germany between 1940 and 1945? Did he not triumph by winning the Battle of the Atlantic, by building and maintaining his Grand Alliance with Stalin and Roosevelt, by wearing Hitler down in North Africa and in the so-called “soft underbelly” of Europe, and by doing everything in his power to facilitate the smashing of the German war machine on the Eastern Front?

Churchill’s view, learned from history, was that the final mortal stroke had to wait until the enemy was weakened. This surely was the lesson of Napoleon. The irony, of course, is that it is a lesson Napoleon had failed to learn.

“I will not prejudge the work of the [Council of Europe] but I hope they will remember Napoleon's saying: ‘A constitution must be short and obscure.’” —WSC, 1949

Endnotes

2. WSC, correspondence with the President of the Comité du Centenaire de la mort de Napoléon, October-November 1920, Churchill Papers, CHAR 2/111/44 & 49.
6. Paul Johnson, Napoleon, x, 193.
10. Andrew Roberts, Napoleon and Wellington, 14, 29, 59.
The taste and judgement of the theatre-going public have cordially endorsed the opinion which I ventured to express two months ago upon the admirable presentation of Napoleon at St. Helena by Mr. Sherriff and Mlle. Jeanne de Casalis.

The critics had used this play very roughly on its first night at the Old Vic. It had apparently wandered round the London producers’ offices for a couple of years without finding anyone willing to undertake it. For a fortnight it had played to very thin houses, and was at its last gasp. But once attention was publicly drawn to its exceptional merit it received widespread and general recognition. It had delighted many thousands of well-informed people, and is now apparently assured of a long and remarkable success.

The subject is indeed one which fascinates the imagination. Apart altogether from being the last phase in the life of the greatest man of action ever known to human records, the story of Napoleon’s captivity and death upon the rock of St. Helena is in itself one of the most moving tragedies of history.

Six bitter years of narrowness and monotony, mocked by false hopes, accompanied by an infinity of petty vexations, and closing in illness, pain and protracted death, form the shadow without which twenty years of prodigy, power, and glory would be incomplete.

All attempts to place Napoleon upon the stage or the screen necessarily challenge the mental picture which we each of us have formed of the great Emperor. Disillusionment and even a sense of irritation are almost inevitable. These reactions are usually aggravated as the performance proceeds.

What is remarkable about Mr. Kenneth Kent’s personification is that these feelings die away as one act succeeds another. He seems more like Napoleon at the end than at the beginning, and we are left with an impression of intimacy and reality which is in this class of drama unique.

Here is the Corsican ogre with his hundred crimes, his hundred battles, and the deaths of several millions of human beings upon his head, caught at last by his one indomitable enemy and flung with a handful of followers, mostly strangers to him, to rot and die on a volcanic islet lost in the wastes of the ocean.

“He had that rascal Boney,” said in effect the Secretary of State to Sir Hudson Lowe. “Keep him fast, with as little expense and publicity as is possible, till we are rid of him for ever.”

Meanwhile all the great affairs of the world proceeded, and the Sovereigns of the Holy Alliance reigned undisputed in splendour with their pomp, their conferences and Acts of State. Yet at the distance of a century world-history takes little note of them. All its attention is focused upon the lonely figure in his ocean prison.

Alexander, the Emperor Joseph, Louis XVIII, the Regent—who bothers much about them and the glittering circles in which they moved? In fact, one may almost say that the history of the world in the six years after Waterloo is the captivity and death of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Minute examination has been made of the character and conduct not only of every member of Napoleon’s suite but of every person, great or small, old or young, on the island of St. Helena who came in contact with him. All their qualities, good, bad or indifferent, their private lives, all they said and wrote, their foibles, their follies, their meannesses or their generosity have been the subject of elaborate and searching scrutiny.

Drawn from their obscurity by contact with the Great Man, they are exhibited or gibbeted for all time to an ever larger and more curious audience. Time passes and the night of time comes on. All is forgotten; all is swallowed and lost in the mist and darkness. But the light of Napoleon glows red, baleful, ever strengthening, as the years roll by. All who won his smile win fame; all who incurred his anger or contempt are smitten. In this there is scant justice and often rank injustice. But it extends to every quarter of the globe, to every member of his family, to every Sovereign, to every...
Minister or official concerned with his fate, and it will last as long as books are written and read or stories told. In those six years the legend grew in Europe that Napoleon stood for Freedom, Liberalism, Democracy, for the French Revolution, for the downfall of tyrants, for the rights and advance of the common people in every land.

As Byron wrote:

Conqueror and Captain of the Earth thou art, She trembles at thee still....

The hopes of countless millions gripped in the old monarchical and aristocratic systems sought him and his isle across the vast distances. A plebiscite in France, in England, in Austria would have acclaimed him as Dictator of the proletariat. These ideas were far removed from any true foundation.

Napoleon was a military tyrant, a conqueror, a man of order and discipline, a man of mundane ambitions and overwhelming egotism; but his grandeur defied misfortune and rises superior even to Time. Heartbroken, bored to death and deserted by almost everyone, retiring morosely into the confines of Longwood, then into his garden, into his darkened chamber, and finally to his camp bed, he yet reigned in the hearts of men with an authority he never exercised upon the Imperial throne.

In this good play we see him in the toils, by turns fierce and gentle, wise and petulant, captivating and repulsive. There is hardly a word in the dialogue which did not issue from his lips; there is hardly a movement or gesture which he makes for which there is not authentic record. His haters and admirers will draw the impressions which their prejudices or sympathies require.

The Holy Alliance and the British Government were well advised to guard him well. A brigade of infantry, a squadron of the Fleet, 600 cannon mounted in the island batteries, vigilance untiring—all were needed for the safety of the Old Regime—nay, for the peace of Europe, bled white by twenty years of war.

These precautions did not fail. The hero-monster expired in their anxious grip. History has given him a long revenge.

Even the fame of Wellington, who had slept at The Briars on his way from India, is lessened, and his stature limited when he could write to Admiral Malcolm, “Tell Boney that I find his apartments at the Elysée-Bourbon very comfortable, and that I hope that he likes mine at The Briars as much.” The victor of Waterloo should have had a truer sense of proportion.

But why not see the play?
Churchill and Flandin

THE REST OF THE STORY

In 2010, an item of particular interest was offered at a Christie’s auction in New York City. Dated 24 November 1945, it comprised a one-page letter on Chartwell letterhead (typed at 28 Hyde Park Gate) to Ava, Lady Anderson, signed by Winston Churchill; and a four-page carbon copy of a letter WSC had written ten days earlier to the French statesman Pierre Flandin. The seller was Steve Forbes and the letter was from the collection of his late father Malcolm.

Churchill was writing Lady Anderson about Pierre Flandin, then on trial for his life as a Vichy collaborator, and enclosing a copy of a letter he had sent Flandin for use in his defense. “I do not expect it will make me very popular in France,” Churchill wrote Ava, “but I know you will be in sympathy with it.”

Knowing that his words might spare the man’s life, Churchill had written Flandin: “For many years I regarded you as a strong friend of the Franco-British Entente, and you were the French statesman with whom I had the closest personal contacts before the War.” Churchill recalls Flandin’s eagerness to take joint action with the British against Hitler’s occupation of the Rhineland in 1936 and, less favorably, Flandin’s support of the Munich capitulation in 1938.

The spare description in Christie’s catalogue left many unanswered questions. What were the “personal contacts” that Churchill had with Flandin before the war? Why was he defending him now? Who was Ava Anderson, and why would she be sympathetic to aiding Flandin in his time of peril? I scheduled a trip to New York, where I was fortunate enough to bid successfully on this letter. I was excited because by then I had done my research and, to paraphrase Paul Harvey, I knew “the rest of the story.”

**Flandin’s Lost Cause**

To answer the questions we must turn the clock back to the 1930s, Churchill’s “wilderness years,” when he held no cabinet positions and was out of favor with his party—initially because of his stand against Indian self-rule and later for his criticism of the British government’s failure to rearm against the threat of Hitler’s Germany.

Pierre Etienne Flandin (1889-1958), a conservative politician of the Third Republic, leader of the Democratic Republican Alliance (ARD), had been France’s prime minister from November 1934 to December 1935. He served in a number of Cabinet positions and was foreign minister when Hitler reoccupied the Rhineland in March 1936. In December 1940, Vichy’s head of state, Marshal Pétain, appointed Flandin foreign minister and vice-premier to replace Pierre Laval, but he was quickly ousted, by François Darlan, in January 1941.

Churchill had welcomed Flandin’s appointment as Vichy foreign minister, thinking he would be a moderating influence, and indeed he did stop a Vichy plan to attack a Free French garrison in Chad. But the Germans mistrusted Flandin and refused to deal with him, which had the effect of Darlan taking his place. That did not prevent Flandin’s arrest by the Free French in Algiers in 1943 and his 1945 trial for collaboration. Thus Churchill wrote:

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Mr. Marsh (rcmarsha2@aol.com) is President of the Winston Churchill Society of Michigan.
When in the middle of December 1940, I learned that you had joined the Vichy Government, I was glad. I thought to myself “here is a friend of England in a high position in the Vichy Government, and I am sure that this will lessen the danger of that Government declaring formal war on us.” I also thought it only too probable that you would not last long, and that the Germans would have you out. This is exactly what happened, at the beginning of February.

The “personal contacts” Churchill alludes to apparently began with a 15 November 1934 telegram of congratulations from Winston and Clementine Churchill when Flandin had become prime minister. They met personally in London at a Foreign Office banquet on 1 February 1935. A stream of correspondence followed, including Churchill’s condolences on May 6th, when Flandin and his wife suffered a car accident which contributed in part to his resigning the premiership; and a July 13th letter when WSC warned, “I fear greatly the dangers which menace both our countries and indeed what is still called civilization.” Five months later on December 10th, Churchill and his wife lunched with Flandin in Paris.

As prime minister, Churchill was distressed when Flandin was arrested by the Free French in December 1943, writing his foreign secretary, Anthony Eden: “I am of the opinion that for the French Committee to proceed against him would be proof that they are unfit to be considered in any way to be the trustees of France but rather that they are small, ambitious intriguers endeavouring to improve their position by maltreating unpopular figures.”

The PM personally voiced his concerns about Flandin’s arrest to General de Gaulle in Marrakesh on 12 January 1944, when he bluntly said, “…if they were going to draw the line of impurity at Flandin, they would be making so wide a schism in France that the resultant friction in any territory that might be liberated would hamper our military operations and was therefore a matter of concern to us.”
Despite Churchill’s objection, Flandin remained in prison until July 1945, when he was permitted to go to a nursing home.9 Now it was November, Flandin was on trial for his life, and Churchill hastened to intervene again on his behalf. “It is for you and your legal advisers,” he cautioned the Frenchman, “to judge whether the reading of this letter [in court] will be serviceable to you, or not.”

Flandin had no doubt of the value of Churchill’s letter, and reaped a bonus: the letter was presented to the French court by Randolph Churchill, representing his father and adding his own favorable testimony. It had its effect when the collaboration charges were dismissed in January and Flandin was released from custody. But he was not altogether exonerated: the court declared him ineligible ever to serve in the French Assembly.10

Churchill was pleased that the worst had been avoided, and wrote in his war memoirs that Randolph “had seen much of Flandin during the African Campaign….and I am glad to think his advocacy, and also [my] letter, were not without influence. Weakness is not treason, though it be equally disastrous.”11

Ava’s Devotion
The only person to whom Churchill thought to send a copy of his Flandin letter was Ava, Lady Anderson (1896-1974), wife of John Anderson. Named to the peerage as Viscount Waverley in 1952, Anderson, who lent his name to the famous World War II “Anderson Shelter,” had served as Home Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer in Churchill’s wartime coalition. But why did Churchill copy Ava? The reason was that she had played a vital role in the mid-1930s story of France and Flandin.

Daughter of the historian J.E.C. Bodley (1853-1925), Ava had married Ralph Follett Wigram (1890-1936) in 1925. They had one child, Charles Edward Thomas (1929-1951), who was handicapped, possibly with Down’s Syndrome or cerebral palsy. Ralph died on 31 December 1936; Ava married John Anderson five years later.12

Through Ralph, whom he admired, Churchill and Ava became friends. During the mid-1930s Wigram was counselor and head of the Central Department at the Foreign Office, which dealt with Nazi Germany. Churchill was the primary proponent of British rearmament. Wigram knew the truth, and beginning in 1934 supported Churchill’s efforts by supplying him with secret information, primarily about German air strength. With it, Churchill assailed the government’s lack of preparedness.

In this age of “WikiLeads” it is interesting to note that Sir Robert Vansittart, head of the Foreign Office at the time, apparently knew and approved of Wigram providing information to Churchill. Moreover, Wigram’s activity may not have been illegal since Churchill, although not a minister, was still a privy counselor, and probably entitled to sensitive material. Legal or not, Churchill’s access to and use of this information was a major irritant to Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin and his successor, Neville Chamberlain.
Churchill obtained information regarding German rearmament from many sources, including Flandin. On 7 March 1936, he wrote Flandin seeking French estimates of German air strength and details of French military expenditures. The Frenchman replied the next day, enclosing the information. But it was Germany’s occupation of the Rhineland on 7 March 1936, in violation of both the Versailles and Locarno Treaties, that flung Churchill, Flandin, and the Wigrams together in common cause.

Hitler’s action was not entirely unanticipated. Flandin had traveled to London in the last week of January 1936, ostensibly to attend George V’s state funeral but also to meet with Foreign Secretary Eden and Prime Minister Baldwin about the likely crisis. Flandin wanted to know what Great Britain would do if Hitler attempted to seize the Rhineland. To his consternation, neither Englishman would provide a definitive response.

On March 9th, two days after the Rhineland was occupied, Eden flew to Paris with Lord Halifax and Wigram to meet with Flandin and other French officials. Flandin wanted immediate action including, if necessary, ejection of the Germans from the Rhineland by force, together with sanctions against the aggressor. Eden opposed using force but agreed to reconvene their meeting in London a few days later. Although Wigram was merely a civil servant, he vehemently agreed with Flandin and had a private word with him. Meanwhile the League of Nations’ Council moved its meeting on the crisis from Geneva to London.

Returning to England on the evening of March 11th, Wigram immediately drove to Chartwell. After listening to his report, Churchill decided he must talk to Flandin before anyone in the government saw him. At 8:30 the next morning, at his London flat in Morpeth Mansions, WSC met with Flandin, who said he intended to propose a simultaneous mobilization of French and British forces.

Churchill was cautious. He was still hoping to be invited to join the government. In his “detached private position,” he said, he could do little, other than guide the Frenchman to those in the government who shared his view, such as Alfred Duff Cooper. To facilitate such introductions Churchill hosted a dinner for Flandin the same evening.

Churchill left the dinner early to plead Flandin’s case before the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee. Meanwhile, in a controversial act for a civil servant, Wigram called a press conference at his home at Lord North Street for Flandin to speak to the press.

Flandin waxed eloquent before the reporters: “Today the whole world, and especially the small nations, turn their eyes toward England. If England will act now, she can lead Europe. You will have a policy, all the world will follow you, and you will thus prevent war. It is your last chance. If you do not stop Germany now, all is over.”

The French statesman predicted that even if Britain reached a fragile understanding with the Nazis, it would not last. If Hitler was not stopped “by force today, war is inevitable.” The reporters returned to Fleet Street and wrote accounts of Flandin’s appeal—which were promptly buried by their editors.

All was for naught. Baldwin informed Flandin that his Cabinet would not consent to participation in any operation against Germany. Churchill wrote later: “According to Flandin, Mr. Baldwin then said: ‘You may be right, but if there is even one chance in a hundred that war would follow from your police operation, I have not the right to commit England.’ And after a pause he added: ‘England is not in a state to go to war.’”

Flandin’s failed mission was a pivotal event. “There was no doubt that superior strength still lay with the Allies of the former War,” Churchill wrote. “They had only to act to win. Although we did not know what was passing between Hitler and his generals, it was evident that overwhelming force lay on our side.” If France and Great Britain had evicted the Germans from the Rhineland by force, the Nazi regime would have been weakened and perhaps even overthrown. The course of events could have been dramatically different if Flandin had persuaded Baldwin to join with France to confront Hitler.

His spirit broken, Flandin returned to France. The Rhineland crisis was also a traumatic blow to Ralph Wigram—a mortal blow as Churchill later recalled:

“After the French Delegation had left,” wrote his wife to me, “Ralph came back and sat down in a corner of the room where he had never sat before and said to me, ‘War is now inevitable, and it will be the most terrible war there has ever been. I don’t think I shall see it, but you will. Wait now for the bombs on this little house.’ I was frightened at his words, and he went on, “All my work these many years has been no use. I am a failure. I have failed to make the people here realize what is at stake. I am not strong enough, I suppose, I have not been able to make them understand. Winston has always, always understood, and he is strong and will go on to the end.”

My friend never seemed to recover from his shock. He took it too much to heart. After all one can always go on doing what one believes to be his duty, and running ever greater risks till knocked out. Wigram’s profound comprehension reacted on his sensitive nature unduly. His untimely death in December 1936 was an irreparable loss to the Foreign Office, and played its part in the miserable decline of our fortunes.

Ralph Wigram died suddenly on the last day of the year. Some television dramas have depicted his death as a suicide, and there is some support for that view, primarily based on the fact that Wigram’s parents did not attend his funeral. However, Wigram was in poor health with infantile paralysis, and his death certificate listed the cause as a pulmonary hemorrhage.

Churchill was deeply saddened by the loss of his friend, writing to Clementine on 2 January 1937: “I was deeply >>
CHURCHILL AND FLANDIN...

shocked and grieved to learn from Vansittart by chance on New Year’s Eve that poor Ralph Wigram died suddenly on January 2nd. I thought him a grand fellow. A bright steady flame burning in a broken lamp, which guided us towards safety and honour.”

Churchill attended the funeral at Cuckfield Parish Church in Sussex, and afterwards gave a luncheon at Chartwell for the mourners, including Vansittart and Brendan Bracken. Vansittart’s eulogy appeared in The Times for 2 January 1937:

I worked with him for seventeen years and like all those privileged to witness his example of bravery, loyalty, and selfless simplicity, I never ceased to admire his prodigious memory, his prodigious industry, the astonishing ability and fertility that came to him so naturally from the complete mastery of every subject he touched. He exerted extraordinary feats of endurance from his frail body. He was a man, and a first class man. I speak for his service in saying that I never prized a fellow labourer more than this shining comrade and I shall never mourn one more.

So there is “the rest of the story.” It follows that Churchill, with his sense of loyalty, would have thought to send a copy of his Flandin letter to Ava, recalling the crisis which, probably more than any other, guaranteed Hitler’s continued aggressions and the Second World War. Fortunately for me, the cataloguers did not seem to realize just how important these documents were.

Churchill was devoted to Ava for the rest of his life, as she was to him. In 1935 she had taken a photograph of Ralph and Churchill walking in the grounds of Chartwell. Winston signed it and Ava framed it, with a press cutting of his “Finest Hour” speech of 18 June 1940. The photo stood at her bedside until her death in 1974.

When her second husband, John Anderson, died in 1958, Churchill telephoned her to express his sympathy. After commiserating he was silent for awhile. Then he said, his voice breaking with emotion: “For Ralph Wigram grieve.”

Endnotes


2. Churchill’s tenure as Chancellor of the Exchequer ended in June 1929 and he did not hold office again until he was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty at the outbreak of World War II in September 1939. Throughout the 1930s he remained a private Member of Parliament representing Epping, Essex.

3. This telegram stated in part, “we beg of you to accept our sincere congratulations on the great task you have so bravely assumed.” Martin Gilbert, ed., The Churchill Documents, Companion Vol. 12, The Wilderness Years 1929-1935 (Hillsdale, 2009), 917.


5. Ibid., 1167, 1215.

6. Ibid., 1388.


8. Ibid., 646.


12. Martin Gilbert, ed., The Churchill Documents, Companion Vol. 13, The Coming of War 1936-1939 (Hillsdale, Mich.: Hillsdale College Press, 2009), 523, notes 4 and 5. Changes in names and titles can create confusion. Ava was Ava Bodley until 1925, Ava Wigram in 1925-41, Lady Anderson in 1941-52; and the Viscountess Waverey from 1952 until her death. The confusion may have prevented Christie’s cataloguers from recognizing that she was married to Wigram during the time he, Churchill and Flandin fought for rearmament against the Nazi menace.


15. Manchester, Alone, 183.


17. Ibid., 185-86.

18. Ibid., 187-88.


20. Ibid., 152.

21. Ibid., 155.

22. Ava Wigram to WSC, 2 January 1937, in Gilbert, ed., Companion Vol. 13, 525. Wigram’s parents were Eustace Rochester and Mary Grace Wigram.

23. Ibid., 523.

24. Ibid., 525.

25. Ibid., 523.


27. When Churchill was hospitalized after a hernia operation in June 1947, Ava sent him wild strawberries and cream, a special treat in highly rationed postwar Britain. See Gilbert, “Never Despair,” 339.


“WE SEE THE FIGURES OF THE ODD AND BIZARRE POTENTATES....”

A reader writes: “I have been trying for many years to find the exact words of Winston Churchill to this effect: ‘The newsboy pronounces the strange names of this or that potentate and then the next day other names.’ I think it is from The River War but cannot find it in my abridged edition.”

The following paragraph, whose words echo those originally penned by Churchill in his thirteenth of fifteen dispatches from the Sudan after the Battle of Omdurman, written on 12 September 1898, appears on pages 217–18 of the second volume of the first edition of The River War in 1899, in the twenty-first chapter, “After the Victory,” a chapter that was dropped from the abridged edition published in 1902. It has never since been reprinted (which is why you couldn’t find it in your abridged edition):

The calm assurance of the statement, not less than its incongruity, might well provoke a smile amid the horrors of war. But other reflections lie behind. We may consider how strange and varied are the diversions of an Imperial people. Year after year, and stretching back to an indefinite horizon, we see the figures of the odd and bizarre potentates against whom the British arms continually are turned. They pass in a long procession—The Akhound of Swat;1 Cetewayo,2 brandishing an assegai as naked as himself; Kruger,3 singing a psalm of victory; Osman Digna,4 the Immortal and the Irretrievable; Theebaw,5 with his Umbrella; Lobengula,6 gazing fondly at the pages of Truth;6 Prempeh,7 abasing himself in the dust; the Mad Mullah,8 on his white ass; and, latest of all, the Khalifa9 in his coach of state. It is like a pantomime scene at Drury Lane. These extraordinary foreign figures—each with his complete set of crimes, horrible customs, and ‘minor peculiarities’—march one by one from the dark wings of barbarism up to the bright footlights of civilisation. For a space their names are on the wires on the world and the tongues of men. The Sovereign on the Throne, the Minister in his Cabinet, the General in his tent, pronounce or mispronounce their styles and titles. A thousand compositors make the same combination of letters. The unusual syllables become household words. The street-boy bellow them in our ears. The artisan laughs over them at night in his cottage. The child in the nursery is cajoled into virtue or silence by the repetition of the dread accents. And then the world-audience clap their hands, amused yet impatient, and the potentates and their trains pass on, some to exile, some to prison, some to death—for it is a grim jest for them—and their conquerors, taking their possessions, forget even their names. Nor will history record such trash.


—JAMES W. MULLER

Abridged Footnotes
1. Akhund Abd al-Ghafur (c. 1794–1877), now known as Saidu Baba, a buffalo herder who devoted himself to a religious life at the age of eighteen. Usually conciliatory to British rule in India, he joined the tribal war against Britain in 1863 but after the battle at Umbeyla Pass helped to make peace.
2. Cetshwayo kaMpande (1832–1884), ruler of Zululand from 1873; in 1879 he defeated the British at Isandhlwana, but was then defeated at Ulundi.
3. Stephanus Johannes Paulus Kruger (1825–1904), president of the Transvaal, 1883–1902; born in the Cape Colony, he trekked to the Natal, the Orange Free State, and the Transvaal with his fellow Boers, winning a reputation in the first Anglo-Boer War, 1881, that led to his appointment as head of the provisional government. After gold was discovered on the Rand, he protected the Boer state by refusing civil rights to the British settlers called “Uitlanders.”
4. Uthman ibn abî Bakr Disqâ (c. 1840–1926), Mahdist amir. He joined the cause of Muhammad Ahmad in 1883. Though present at the Battles of Atbara and Omdurman in 1898, he took no active part. He fled afterwards to the Red Sea hills, where he was captured in 1900.
5. Thibaw Min (1858–1916), the last king of Burma, 1878–85; he lost his kingdom when it was annexed to the British Empire by Churchill’s father Lord Randolph, who was then secretary of state for India. On Nov. 28, 1885, Mandalay fell; Thibaw, with his two principal queens, was led in pouring rain under an umbrella to a British steamer bound for Rangoon on his way to exile in India, where he later died.
6. Lobengula Khumalo (1845–1894), last ruler of the Ndebele kingdom. After his capital of Bulawayo was attacked in 1893, he died of small-pox while retreating.
7. The anti-imperialist newspaper founded in 1876.
8. Agyeman Premph (c. 1871–1931), 13th king of Asante, 1888–96, whose territory was in the Gold Coast (today’s Ghana). He made war on the British in 1893–94 and again in 1895–96. After the first war, his kingdom became a British protectorate; after the second war, he was deposed, but was permitted to return in 1924.
9. Muhammad Abdille Hassan (1856–1920), religious and military leader who for a quarter-century led his Dervish warriors in defense of Somaliland against Ethiopian and European influence. He should not be confused with Mulla Sad Allah Sartor, leader of the 1897 Malakand rising, who was also styled by the British the “Mad Mullah.”
10. Abd Allâhi Muhammad Turshain, Khalifat al-Mahdi (1846–1899). Commander of the Mahdist forces and ruler of the Mahdist dominions in the Sudan, 1885–99; military ruler of the Sudan after the Mahdi’s death in June 1885.
Winston Churchill and Charles de Gaulle are considered by some to be the greatest figures of the 20th century, largely for their roles in World War II. For allies facing a common foe, however, their relationship was less than ideal. They quarreled frequently, sometimes harboring deep-seated resentment toward one another for months. Referring to the symbol of the Free French, General Spears, envoy to France, remarked, in a comment often attributed to Churchill, “the heaviest cross I have to bear is the Cross of Lorraine.” This succinctly summarized Churchill’s feelings.

The Prime Minister endured antagonistic remarks by de Gaulle for the course of the war. But Churchill was a highly focused and pragmatic leader who was able to overcome his personal animosity and forge a successful partnership, which helped ensure the Allied victory.

On a personal level, Churchill found de Gaulle to be chauvinistic, suspicious and petty. Annoyed by his personality, WSC found the French general’s lack of trust infuriating. Roused once to extreme irritation, the Prime Minister remarked that de Gaulle “thinks he is Clemenceau (having dropped Joan of Arc for the time being).”

Churchill’s inner circle shared his low opinion of de Gaulle and was convinced that de Gaulle saw himself as a modern-day savior of France. Churchill’s Minister of Information, Brendan Bracken, once cracked, “Remember, Winston…he thinks of himself as the reincarnation of St. Joan,” to which Churchill replied, probably not quite in jest: “Yes, but my bishops won’t burn him!” Lord Moran, Churchill’s personal physician, remarked that “de Gaulle positively goes out of his way to be difficult.”

Moran correctly observed that his boss was “a bad hater, but in these days, when he is stretched taut, certain people seem to get on his nerves: de Gaulle is one of them. [De Gaulle] is so stuffed with principles that there is no room left for a little Christian tolerance; in his rigidity, there is no give. Besides, men of his race do not find it easy to accept any foreigner as a superior being and Winston does not like that kind of
agnosticism….the General is a haughty fellow and crammed full of grievances.”

Churchill was distressed by de Gaulle’s “ineradicable suspicions” of their allies. De Gaulle for his part feared that the British and the Americans were conspiring against him in order to seize French colonies at the war’s end. According to Sir John Colville, Churchill’s wartime private secretary, the Frenchman’s concern was less specific: de Gaulle “distusted Anglo-Saxons on principle.” His open distrust created tension and polarized Anglo-French relations, and often made de Gaulle a man Churchill wished to avoid.

The root of their antagonism perhaps lay in de Gaulle’s controversial and counterproductive foreign policy positions, sometimes referred to as “Gaullist pettiness.” In June 1940, he blamed the success of Germany’s assault on France and the Low Countries on lack of British military support on land. Churchill was furious: the record showed that the English had sent 400,000 troops to France, 250,000 of which were locked in battle. The collapse of the French military in the face of German advances had almost caused the loss of the entire British Expeditionary Force.

The Royal Air Force was also substantially engaged in the defense of Britain’s ally, shooting down 400 German planes over France; yet, to the consternation of the British, French authorities released captured German pilots, who went on to participate in an aerial bombing of England. The British saw this as a betrayal, causing “even those who had always loved France [to lose] their faith.”

A year later in July 1941 de Gaulle, perturbed by what he saw as self-interested British fighting in Syria, said he “could not care less whether or not Britain won the war…. all that mattered was that France be saved.” This poisonous remark caused more British to doubt the viability of their alliance with the Free French.

In 1943, after the Anglo-Americans had launched TORCH, the invasion of North Africa, de Gaulle delivered an inflammatory speech blaming its initial problems on the Americans. Churchill responded vigorously, telegraphing his Cabinet: “I ask my colleagues to consider urgently whether we should not now eliminate de Gaulle as a political force.” Churchill’s fury was such that he suggested replacing de Gaulle with a “triumvirate” composed of General Giraud, a war hero of both World War I and World War II; former French Prime Minister Camille Chautemps; and Alexandre Leger, the former head of the French Foreign Office. Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden refused to countenance the idea, sensing rightly that replacing de Gaulle would alienate those who accepted him as the leader of the French resistance. Churchill laid aside his indignation for the sake of the cause, acknowledging that de Gaulle’s ouster would aid the Germans by discouraging French resistance.

In November 1943, after grueling back-to-back Allied conferences in Teheran and Cairo, an exhausted Churchill was stricken with pneumonia and had to recover in Marrakech for three weeks. Several Allied diplomats traveled there to confer with him and Churchill requested a meeting with General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny, a renowned war hero. Suspicious as always, de Gaulle refused to let the general visit, off-handedly explaining that it “would not be opportune.” Churchill was livid. His anger was only dispelled by repeated conciliatory efforts of the British representative at Algiers, Alfred Duff Cooper.

De Gaulle was at his most obstinate on the eve of OVERLORD, the invasion of France in June 1944. The Allied assault on Fortress Europe had been two years in the planning; de Gaulle’s capriciousness nearly put it all at risk.

After Churchill invited de Gaulle to hear about plans for the invasion, the Frenchman, asking to telegraph details to his committee in Algiers, was infuriated when Churchill, rightly fearing the message might be lost or intercepted, forbade the communication. De Gaulle stormed out and was not easily mollified: in August, when Churchill asked to see him in Algiers, he declared himself “too busy.”

Despite de Gaulle’s difficult personality and willful actions, Churchill respected his patriotism and recognized the strategic value of a solid relationship. Colville believed that in a way Churchill admired de Gaulle’s “defiant and frequently crude demeanor, making allowance for rudeness and constant ingratitude….Churchill] realized that only thus could the General…convince himself…that he was maintaining the dignity of his country.”

Churchill did have a way of rising above such frays. Surprising as it seemed to his colleagues, he was often “the only obstacle to the surge of anti-French feeling in government circles.” Churchill himself insisted that despite it all he “understood and admired” the Frenchman, while disliking his “arrogant demeanor.” And the Prime Minister was impressed by de Gaulle’s unwavering popularity and positive effect on French morale.

In the end, the two leaders came to regard each other with respect and even affection: Churchill called de Gaulle the “savior of France”; the General viewed Churchill as “the valiant leader of freedom, and never forgot his crucial support for himself and the Free French in 1940.” During the war, Churchill sometimes said that “one day we’ll go down the Champs Elysées together.” In Paris on Armistice Day, 1944, they did just that.

The relationship, if all too often stiff and formal—far more often than the gregarious Churchill would have preferred—was nevertheless productive. Both men recognized the urgency of their cause. Both knew the most efficient and effective defense against the Nazis was in mutual cooperation. In truth the two of them were quite similar. Both were ardently patriotic and fiercely independent.

In Paris in 1958, then-President de Gaulle presented Churchill with the Ordre de la Libération (ironically sometimes referred to as the “Cross of Lorraine”). De Gaulle himself had founded the Order in 1940 to recognize >>
endnotes

4. Ibid., 87.
6. Ibid., 249.
7. Ibid., 254.
8. Ibid., 250.
9. Ibid., 250.
10. Ibid., 250.
11. Ibid., 250.
12. Quoted in ibid., 254.
13. Sandys and Littman, 211.
15. Ibid., 253.
16. Ibid., 253.
17. Ibid., 255.
18. Ibid., 255.
19. Ibid., 255.
20. Ibid., 255.
21. Ibid., 255-56.
22. Ibid., 255-56.
23. Ibid., 255-56.
24. Ibid., 249.
25. Ibid., 249.
28. Soames, 653.
32. Colville, 265.

Further Reading


John Colville, Winston Churchill and His Inner Circle (New York: Wyndham Books, 1981; The Churchillians in UK) discusses Churchill’s feelings toward de Gaulle during the war, describing the “Gaullist pettiness” and how de Gaulle tried Churchill’s patience.

The final image of their mutual respect is best described by John Colville: “…on the first anniversary of Winston Churchill’s death, his widow received just one letter: a warm, handwritten one from Charles de Gaulle, President of the French Republic.”

The leader of a country at war must manage a dense and intricate array of issues and details. The support and counsel of allies is often crucial to bringing a conflict to a successful end. The need for trusted allies was paramount when Britain and her Empire stood alone. Churchill not only had to fight the Nazi threat, but to face the problem of an alliance with a difficult, sometimes counterproductive leader of a defeated ally which had no one else. Churchill’s pragmatism helped to navigate his stormy relationship with de Gaulle toward a successful outcome.


Celia Sandys and Jonathan Littman, We Shall Not Fail: The Inspiring Leadership of Winston Churchill (New York: Portfolio, 2003) describes Churchill’s strong leadership throughout the course of the war, including the Churchill-de Gaulle relationship.

Mary Soames, Winston and Clementine: The Personal Letters of the Churchills (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999) includes correspondence between Churchill and his wife, who maintained a cordial relationship with de Gaulle. His daughter’s book offers considerable details about her father’s view of de Gaulle and his consequent decisions during the war.


Winston Churchill on France and the French

“All my life I have been grateful for the contribution France has made to the culture and glory of Europe, and above all for the sense of personal liberty and the rights of man which has radiated from the soul of France....Show me a moment when I swerved from this conception, and you will show me a moment when I have been wrong,” —WSC, 1944

Cherbourg, July 1944: In an iconic photo published in *Newsweek*, a French dock worker lights Churchill’s cigar. Alongside the PM is Major General Cecil Moore, U.S. Army, Chief Engineer, European Theatre of Operations. Churchill was making his second visit to France since D-Day, chiefly to meet with Montgomery prior to the second phase of OVERLORD. He visited Utah Beach and the main British landing point at Arromanches, where he examined one of his own ideas, the Mulberry Harbour; and inspected a captured, unfinished flying bomb launching site, now safely in the Allies’ hands. (Imperial War Museum)

“Pétain was of all others fitted to the healing task….He thus restored by the end of the year [1917] that sorely tried, glorious Army upon whose sacrifices the liberties of Europe had through three fearful campaigns mainly depended.”

—The World Crisis III, Part 1, 1927.

“[Foch] began his career a little cub brushed aside by the triumphant march of the German armies to Paris and victory; he lived to see all the might of valiant Germany prostrate and suppliant at his pencil tip. In the weakest position he endured the worst with his country; at the summit of power he directed its absolute triumph….Fortune lighted his crest….In 1914 he had saved the day by refusing to recognise defeat. In 1915 and in 1916 he broke his teeth upon the Impossible. But 1918 was created for him.”


“‘We have all heard of how Dr. Guillotin was executed by the instrument that he invented....’

[Sir Herbert Samuel: “He was not!”]

“Well, he ought to have been.”

—29 April 1931

★★★

“The truth is that Clemenceau embodied and expressed France. As much as any single human being, miraculously magnified, can ever be a nation, he was France. Fancy paints nations in symbolic animals—the British Lion, the American Eagle, the Russian double-headed ditto, the Gallic Cock. But the Old Tiger, with his quaint, stylish cap, his white moustache and burning eye, would make a truer mascot for France than any barnyard fowl. He was an apparition of the French Revolution at its sublime moment.

“The Clemenceau of the Peace was a great statesman. He was confronted with enormous difficulties. He made for France the best bargain that the Allies, who were also the world, would tolerate. France was disappointed; Foch was disappointed, and also offended by personal frictions. >>
**CHURCHILL ON FRANCE...**

Clemenceau, unrepentant to the end, continued to bay at the Church. The Presidency passed to an amiable nonentity [Paul Deschanel], who soon tumbled out of a railway carriage.  


★★★

“We all know that the French are pacific. They are quite as pacific as we are…. But the French seem much nearer to the danger than we are. There is no strip of salt water to guard their land and their liberties. We must remember that they are the only other great European country that has not reverted to despotism or dictatorship in one form or another.”

—24 October 1935.

★★★

“The peasants have the land. The aristocracy are broken. The Church is quelled. For good or for ill the French people have been effectively masters in their own house, and have built as they chose upon the ruins of the old régime. They have done what they like. Their difficulty is to like what they have done.”


★★★

“Many…are apt to regard the French as a vain, volatile, fanciful, hysterical nation. As a matter of fact they are one of the most grim, sober, unsentimental, calculating and tenacious races in the world…. The British are good at paying taxes, but detest drill. The French do not mind drill, but avoid taxes. Both nations can still fight, if they are convinced there is no other way of surviving; but in such a case France would have a small surplus and Britain a small army.”


★★★

“…at a moment of great disaster, when it seemed that the French and British armies might well be severed from one another by the German advance, the illustrious Marshal [Foch] took command of the stricken field, and after a critical and even agonizing month, restored the fortunes of the war. General Weygand, who was head of his military family—as the French put it—said: If Marshal Foch were here now, he would not waste time deploring what has been lost. He would say: ‘Do not yield another yard.’”

—19 May 1939, Corn Exchange, Cambridge.

★★★

“The House will feel profound sorrow at the fate of the great French nation and people to whom we have been joined so long in war and peace, and whom we have regarded as trustees with ourselves for the progress of a liberal culture and tolerant civilization of Europe.”

—25 June 1940.

★★★

“…the French were now fighting with all their vigour for the first time since the war broke out.”

—3 July 1940, Colville, Fringes of Power. In July 1940, a British squadron destroyed the bulk of the French fleet at their ports in North Africa when the French refused either to surrender them or to sail them to neutral ports.

★★★

“Faith is given to us, to help and comfort us when we stand in awe before the unfurling scroll of human destiny. And I proclaim my faith that some of us will live to see a fourteenth of July when a liberated France will once again…stand forward as the champion of the freedom and the rights of man. When the day dawns, as dawn it will, the soul of France will turn with comprehension and kindness to those Frenchmen and Frenchwomen, wherever they may be, who in the darkest hour did not despair of the Republic.”

—14 July 1940, Bastille Day.

★★★

“Our old comradeship with France is not dead. In General de Gaulle and his gallant band, that comradeship takes an effective form. These free Frenchmen have been condemned to death by Vichy, but the day will come, as surely as the sun will rise tomorrow, when their names will be held in honour, and their names will be graven in stone in the streets and villages of a France restored in a liberated Europe to its full freedom and its ancient fame.”

—20 August 1940.

★★★

“Frenchmen! For more than thirty years in peace and war I have marched with you. I am marching still along the same road. Tonight I speak to you at your firesides, wherever you may be, or whatever your fortunes are. I repeat the prayer upon the louis d’or, ‘Dieu protège la France.’ Here at home in England, under the fire of the Boche, we do not forget the ties and links that unite us to France…. Here in London, which Herr Hitler says he will reduce to ashes…our Air Force has more than held its own. We are waiting for the long-promised invasion. So are the fishes.”

—21 October 1940, Broadcast to France.

★★★

“I certainly deprecate any comparison between Herr Hitler and Napoleon; I do not wish to insult the dead.”

—19 December 1940.
“While there are men like General de Gaulle and all those who follow him—and they are legion throughout France—and men like General Giraud, that gallant warrior whom no prison can hold, while there are men like those to stand forward in the name and in the cause of France, my confidence in the future of France is sure.”
—19 November 1942.

★★★

“The Almighty in His infinite wisdom did not see fit to create Frenchmen in the image of Englishmen. In a State like France which has experienced so many convulsions—Monarchy, Convention, Directory, Consulate, Empire, Monarchy, Empire and finally Republic—there has grown up a principle founded on the ‘droit administratif’ which undoubtedly governs the action of many French officers and officials in times of revolution and change. It is a highly legalistic habit of mind and it arises from a subconscious sense of national self-preservation against the dangers of sheer anarchy...

“We all thought General Giraud was the man for the job, and that his arrival would be electrical. In this opinion, General Giraud emphatically agreed.”
—Secret session speech. 10 December 1942.

★★★

“Comic relief has been afforded by the attempt to bring de Gaulle to the altar where Giraud has been waiting impatiently for several days! [De Gaulle] thinks he is Clemenceau (having dropped Joan of Arc for the time being), and wishes Giraud to be Foch, i.e., dismissable at Prime Minister Clemenceau’s pleasure! When a country undergoes so frightful a catastrophe as France, every other evil swarms down upon her like carrion crows.”
—WSC to his wife, Casablanca, 24 January 1943.

★★★

“When Voltaire was invited to visit the Prussian Court he stipulated that all expenses should be paid, and that the Order of Merit should be thrown in. Both were forthcoming.”
—22 March 1944.

★★★

“For forty years I have been a consistent friend of France and her brave army; all my life I have been grateful for the contribution France has made to the culture and glory of Europe, and above all for the sense of personal liberty and the rights of man which has radiated from the soul of France. But these are not matters of sentiment or personal feeling. It is one of the main interests of Great Britain that a friendly France should regain and hold her place among the major powers of Europe and the world. Show me a moment when I swerved from this conception, and you will show me a moment when I have been wrong....

“I had many differences with General de Gaulle, but I have never forgotten, and can never forget, that he stood forth as the first eminent Frenchman to face the common foe in what seemed to be the hour of ruin of his country, and possibly of ours; and it is only fair and becoming that he should stand first and foremost in the days when France shall again be raised, and raise herself, to her rightful place among the great Powers of Europe and of the world.”
—2 August 1944.

★★★

“… after Leipzig in 1813, Napoleon left all his garrisons on the Rhine, and 40,000 men in Hamburg…. Similarly, Hitler has successfully scattered the German armies all over Europe, and by obstinating at every point, from Stalingrad and Tunis down to the present moment, he has stripped himself of the power to concentrate in main strength for the final struggle.”
—28 September 1944.

★★★

“I am going to give you a warning: be on your guard, because I am going to speak, or try to speak, in French, a formidable undertaking and one which will put great demands on your friendship for Great Britain.”

★★★

“I rejoice in the undoubted growing recovery of France; but I want to warn you that the kind of political whirligig under which France lives, which is such great fun for the politicians and for all the little ardent parties into which they are divided, would be fatal to Britain. We cannot afford to have a period of French politics in Westminster.”

★★★

“The Frogs are getting all they can for nothing, and we are getting nothing for all we can.”
—31 May 1954, Downing Street (Mary Soames, Speaking for Themselves). WSC to his wife, referring to a Geneva conference after the French collapse in Indo-China.

★★★

“There now appeared upon the ravaged scene an Angel of Deliverance, the noblest patriot of France, the most splendid of her heroes, the most beloved of her saints, the most inspiring of all her memories, the peasant Maid, the ever-shining, ever-glorious Joan of Arc. In the poor, remote hamlet of Domrémy, on the fringe of the Vosges Forest, she served at the inn.”
—The Birth of Britain, 1956.
Churchill as Bricklayer

“...200 bricks and 2000 words a day” —WSC to Stanley Baldwin, 1928

In January 1952, Winston S. Churchill arrived in New York Harbor aboard the Queen Mary on a visit to the eastern United States. Dorothy McCordle, society reporter of The Washington Post, recorded a story told by members of the staff accompanying the Prime Minister from New York to Washington.

In a delightful piece dated 13 January 1952, McCordle humorously wrote that the man Americans knew as the bulldog leader of World War II had acquired a new title for his current visit to America: “bricklayer.”

Those travelling with Churchill had related that the day before he left for the United States, he had been asked to lay a foundation stone in Bristol, where he was Chancellor of the University. WSC picked up a silver trowel provided for the occasion and looked at the foundation stone. To the surprise of everyone he laid the trowel aside and said, “The stone isn’t level.” McCordle wrote: “Red-faced officials produced measuring instruments and in a second discovered that Winnie was right. Solemnly, they adjusted the stone, and then Winnie the bricklayer nodded his approval, took up the silver trowel, and smoothed the cement.”

The British public’s knowledge of Churchill as an amateur bricklayer had become known twenty-four years earlier in 1928, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, a position he held from November 1924 to June 1929 under Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin. During the summer and autumn of 1928, Churchill spent most of his time at Chartwell, finishing the fourth volume of his war memoir, The World Crisis, which he subtitled The Aftermath.

Churchill had been under pressure by his Conservative colleagues as well as his financial duties, and Baldwin knew

Mr. Glueckstein is a Long Island, New York writer and a frequent FH contributor. His last article was on the Morgan Library exhibit, FH 155: 36.
he needed a rest, writing him on August 5th: “Do remember what I said about resting from current problems. Paint, write, play with your dams [probably referring to Chartwell’s pond-feeding waterworks]. But a big year will soon begin and much depends on your keeping fit.”

Churchill’s ministerial work was brought from the Treasury to Chartwell by car, and he dedicated several hours to it daily. In addition to writing and working on government duties, WSC also found time to help build a tiny cottage for his daughters, on the lower, eastern boundary of the kitchen garden. Churchill’s daughter Mary remembered:

> While my father was constructing the red-brick walls which now surround the garden, he had the delightful idea of building a little one-roomed cottage in the line of the wall for Sarah and me: it was meant for us both, but Sarah, who had started at boarding school in 1927, outgrew its pleasures fairly soon, and this charming dwelling became known as the Marycot.⁵

In constructing the Marycot, Martin Gilbert wrote, Churchill helped with the bricklaying.⁶ Although it is not known exactly why he became interested in this trade, it is known that he was taught the skill by two of his Chartwell employees, Messrs. Whitbread and Kurn, and a professional bricklayer named Benny Barnes. It was Barnes who often found himself picking up where Churchill left off when duties took the minister away from his wall building. How much was built by Churchill or Barnes is not known.

Churchill was also directly involved in buying bricks, presumably for the cottage, which he chose to blend with those on the main house. For advice he approached his friend George Mowlem-Burt, chairman of John Mowlem Construction, and was referred to Bertrand Cardain Lamb of W.T. Lamb & Sons. Churchill visited their brickworks at Godstone, and Lamb’s son Richard subsequently went to Chartwell with samples. However, the match was not good enough, so four bricks were removed from an old wall for a better match. The removal was made on condition that if Lamb’s couldn’t make an acceptable duplicate, the company would pay for the four to be replaced. Richard Lamb returned with fresh samples Churchill found satisfactory, and he placed an order for 4000 new bricks.

On his second visit, Lamb gave Churchill some instructions in the correct way of laying bricks. Later, in 1934 and 1935, Churchill purchased from Lambs two more batches of 2000 and 4000 bricks. He particularly liked the plum tinted ones and stated that he would most likely need 8000 in total; however, he gave no hint of how the bricks would be used, but it is likely they went into additional walls.

Working on the Marycot gave Churchill a great amount of pride and joy in his six-year-old daughter, as shown by a letter he wrote to his wife, who was away with Sarah:

> Mary’s house is growing and I hope to have a treat for you when you come… Mary has taken the greatest interest in the work and laid the foundation stone with great ceremony. She was presented with a bouquet by the Prof. [Frederick Lindemann] and then manifested a great desire to make a speech. We all had to stand for five minutes while she remained in deep thought, her lips frequently moving over the sentences. In the end she said it regards it as a great honour to have been called upon to lay this foundation stone and that she hoped she would spend many happy hours in the house when it was finished. (Loud cheers.)⁷

On 2 September 1928, Churchill wrote Baldwin about his time at Chartwell: “I have had a delightful month building a cottage and dictating a book: 200 bricks and 2000 words a day.”⁸ A day later the Associated Press reported a comment in The Evening Standard (prematurely

> F you are desirous of continuing at bricklaying, it is respectfully suggested that you become a member of this society. All good workmen join an organization….”  —JAMES LANE, AMALGAMATED UNION OF BUILDING TRADES WORKERS TO WSC, 1928

awarding WSC a knighthood he wouldn’t have until 1953):

> …Winston Churchill, Chancellor of the Exchequer, has become an amateur bricklayer. A reporter found Sir Winston [sic] acting the part of a bricklayer to perfection on the home of one of his servants on his estate at Westerham. His young daughter, Sarah, was “hod carrier” for him, carrying the bricks while her father set them in place and tapped them with a trowel.

The AP report went on: “Three glaring inconsistencies in Sir Winston’s make-up are pointed out in the story, which mentions his cigar, gloves and hat and coat such as bricklayers never wear on a summer day.” Finally the AP reported, “Sir Winston said he had been laying bricks for a fortnight, but planned to ‘lay off’ tomorrow and go on a holiday.”⁹

After it became known that Churchill laid bricks, a photograph of him at work was published in the British press. The picture, Stefan Buczacki wrote, “unfortunately showed one corner brick perched extremely precariously while Churchill, trowel in hand, beamed contently from above.”⁸

The photograph resulted in mixed reviews. One irate >>
Churchill received a more positive letter from James Lane, Mayor of Battersea, who was also the organiser of his local division of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trades Workers (AUBTW), the union including bricklayers and masons. Lane wrote: “If you are desirous of continuing at bricklaying it is respectfully suggested that you become a member of this society. All good workmen join an organization with a view to keeping up the traditions of honourable occupation. You will be waited on at your convenience for enrollment.”

“I do not feel that I am sufficiently qualified,” answered Churchill to Lane’s first letter.

The union official replied: “I was aware that you would not be sufficiently competent to carry on the work of a fully qualified bricklayer. But...as time passes you will improve your craftmanship in a similar manner to those who have entered the trade under the Government adult apprenticeship scheme.”

Churchill cautiously replied: “Would you mind letting me know whether for instance, there is a rule regulating the number of bricks which a man may lay a day...and what are the restrictions on overtime.”

“Right Honorable Sir,” responded Lane, “there is no restriction whatsoever on the number of bricks a member of this union may lay....So far as overtime is concerned this is governed by the national agreement between the employers and the operatives.”

Lane also advised that “if you should be called out on strike you will be entitled to one pound per week and to an additional unemployment benefit should you at any time fall out of employment.” The unemployment benefit described by Lane required all members to pay a weekly contribution of nine pence.

Urging the Chancellor to become a unionized bricklayer, Lane noted that when William McKinley was President of the United States, he had to become a member of the appropriate craft organization before he could lay a foundation stone.

After further inquiries, Churchill did complete an application and sent an admission fee cheque for five shillings. George Hick, chairman of the AUBTW, said it would be interesting to see whether Churchill will contract in for the politics fund,” which referred to the union levy for the Labour Party, against which Churchill would be campaigning in the following year’s elections.

On 10 October 1928, Churchill was inducted into the AUBTW in private proceedings in his office at the Treasury by a pleased James Lane. Churchill was issued a membership card signed by Chairman Hicks. It read: “Winston S. Churchill, Westerham, Kent. Occupation, bricklayer.”

Lane later displayed the Chancellor’s signature on the prescribed forms. He said that Sir William Joynson-Hicks, the Home Secretary, had also been invited to join the union, but had declined: “The invitation followed an experiment by Sir William in a housing scheme. The promoters had claimed unskilled men could lay 3000 bricks a day, but the Home Secretary fell short of half this number.”

The press zeroed in on the story with headlines: “Mr. Churchill Joins Bricklayers in Union” and “New Role for Versatile Winston.” Sir Abe Bailey and a handful of union members wrote Churchill to congratulate him; one member even offered to work as his hod carrier. But most members of the union were unhappy: it was Churchill, after all, who had led the forces of the government in the union-led General Strike two years before.

One union member, who signed himself “A British Subject Sodden with Taxation,” wrote: “You damned old hypocrite. It would do you and the country good if you were forced to earn your daily bread by laying bricks instead of playing at it, and making yourself look like a fool.”

Its members’ unhappiness with Churchill in their union was not altogether surprising. The AUBTW was described as “a left wing organization” which had passed a resolution at its Conference a few weeks earlier that read: “This Conference calls upon the Labour Party Executive and the parliamentary Labour Party to expose the danger of war to the workers and to mobilize them for organized action against the war preparation of the Baldwin Government.”

As a result of several outraged messages to the union’s Executive Council about Churchill’s admission, the matter was debated at length at its meeting on 26 October. Agenda item 3 read, “Winston S. Churchill.”
Union branches protesting his admission as a “Brother” argued that Churchill’s application had not been completed properly, that the proposal hadn’t been seconded, that his cheque had not been cashed, and, most importantly, Churchill had not given any details of the length of time he had worked at the bricklaying trade.

Although it was recognized that the matter was never intended to be taken too seriously and had been “viewed generally in a wrong light,” the Executive Council decided to act and reverse its initial decision: “That this Council declares that Mr. Winston Churchill is not eligible for membership of this union, and that Bro. Lane, No. 2 Divisional Organiser, be advised to this effect accordingly.”

A formal statement outlining the matter, with a copy of the resolution, was circulated to all divisional councils, branches, and committees. In addition, the statement and resolution was copied and provided to the Daily Herald, the official organ of the Labour Movement.

Despite his expulsion, Churchill was disinclined to give up his membership. The union, he said, having accepted his membership, did not have the legal power to oust him. On November 1st, a statement was released on his behalf:

Mr. Churchill does not see how he could accept expulsion without endangering the position of other members of the union who, having been duly accepted as members, by responsible authorities, ought to have assurance they cannot be turned out for political reasons. It would be injurious to the interests of the union if doubt were thrown upon the validity of the signatures and authority of its responsible officers. Mr. Churchill hopes, therefore, that the matter be further considered and the correspondence studied by the Executive Council.

No further action was taken by the union, nor would it have been expected to reverse the decision.

Despite his ouster, which was undoubtedly a personal embarrassment for Churchill, his pleasure in bricklaying continued, as witnessed thirteen years later. In 1942, when his daughter Mary was posted to the 469 Heavy (Mixed) Anti-Aircraft Battery at Enfield, the first VIPs to visit the camp were her parents:

...my comrades really seemed quite pleased to show off our skills. In the event it wasn’t only our skills that were shown off: there were some building works in progress on the site, and—to my embarrassment, but everyone else’s delight—my father stopped, seized a trowel, and laid down a line of bricks!

As in 1942 and 1952, there were undoubtedly other times when Churchill was asked to wield a trowel in his illustrious career, for his bricklaying experience had become part of his legend. It would be fair to surmise that he would have performed at each opportunity with the same ardor, attention and satisfaction he had in working on the Marycot, decades earlier at Chartwell.

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Endnotes

1. Dorothy McCardle, “‘Winnie’ Wanted Most to See His Daughter,” The Washington Post, 13 January 1952. We quote verbatim, though Churchill disliked the nickname “Winnie,” except when used by his nurse Mrs. Everest.
5. Soames, 43-44. See also “Mary’s First Speech,” a painting by WSC, on the cover of Finest Hour 148, Autumn 2010.
9. Ibid., 170.
15. Ibid.
Marriage of Convenience: Churchill and “Bomber” Harris

Controversy forever surrounds the Allied strategic bombing of Germany, during most of which Sir Arthur Harris headed the Royal Air Force Bomber Command. From early 1942 to war’s end, Harris worked closely with Churchill, who found in him “a kindred spirit, a man who ‘would not flag or fail,’ someone who would fight the war to a finish, however hard the road to victory, however high the cost. [After 1945] Churchill found it advisable to distance himself from a man whose wartime actions, however justified and officially approved at the time, were becoming contentious.” The full story of their relationship is more complex than that.

While Churchill rarely mentioned Sir Arthur Harris in his postwar memoirs, the Bomber Command leader had served the prime minister’s goals and strategies at least as much as the more widely praised Field Marshal Montgomery. Britain’s few winning British commanders in the long years before D-Day provided the sharp end of the country’s resolve to see the war through, and Bomber Command carried that role, at fearsome cost, for three and one-half years.

Right Man, Right Place

Arthur Travers Harris (1892-1984), a Royal Flying Corps and RAF officer since 1915, took command of 5 Group’s bombers in 1939, becoming an air marshal when he was promoted to head Bomber Command in February 1942. He was knighted shortly thereafter. Harris’s driving dedication to the bombing effort (he scarcely took a day off for the duration of the war) endeared him to an often-beleaguered Churchill. To his friends he was “Bert”; to the flying crews who seldom saw him in person, it was “Butch” or “Butcher”; while he was often the “Chief Bomber” to the prime minister and simply “Bomber Harris” to the usually admiring press.

When Harris took control of the British bombing effort, the Empire had just lost Hong Kong and Singapore, and its army was faring poorly against Rommel in North Africa. Parliament and the nation were restless in the face of constant British setbacks. Harris found Bomber Command to have insufficient and inadequate aircraft, poor training, and crude navigation and bomb-aiming techniques. With a high loss rate and precious little to show for it, there was no wonder why morale was low.

On the other hand, Britain’s best four-engine bomber, the legendary Lancaster, was finally reaching squadron service, supporting larger missions and providing the ability to hit targets deep in Germany.

For eighteen months before Harris’s arrival and nearly forty months after, Bomber Command spearheaded the British war effort against Hitler, touted by Churchill as the second front Stalin was constantly demanding. Every night,
Harris sent out his bombers, sometimes with notable success, as against Hamburg in July 1943. More often results tended to be much less impressive.

The Bomber and the P.M.

While one historian says there was little warmth between Harris and Churchill, others differ. One account described The Bomber as “a court favorite, appearing regularly at the prime minister’s table.” That Bomber Command headquarters at High Wycombe was just a half-hour’s drive from Chequers surely helped. Harris’s most recent biographer argues that mutual appeal drove the relationship:

They shared a sense of history; while Harris was no author he was an avid reader of military history and could appreciate Churchill’s insights and perspectives. Each had his vivid recollection of the First World War and its lessons. Neither had subsequently had any doubts about the dangers of a resurgent Germany; for both there was “unfinished business” to be done. Above all, there was in both men an overriding conviction that one wins wars only by taking them to the enemy. The offensive spirit, the single-minded tenacity, the outspokenness that Churchill observed in Harris were qualities that matched his own….While Churchill enjoyed Harris’s zeal, he saw the bombers (and their crews) more as a necessary tool in forging a victory, never emotionally identifying with them as he did with Fighter Command during the 1940 Battle of Britain.

Remembering those days of close collaboration, Harris did admit that the eloquent Churchill was a poor listener:

I was frequently bidden to Chequers, especially during the week-ends when Winston was normally there. I never failed to return from these visits invigorated and full of renewed hope and enthusiasm, in spite of the appalling hours Winston habitually kept…If I wanted to get anything across or to give any complicated explanation, I found it much better to send him a paper than to talk to him.

We can see from this remark that their relationship cut across conventional lines of command. When Harris sent those papers, he copied Air Chief Marshal Charles Portal, chief of the Air Staff—but the direct access to the top surely aided the needs of his command.

Nor did it hurt in Churchill’s eyes that Harris rapidly adopted the area or city-wide bombing tactics favored by the prime minister’s chief scientific adviser. Reviewing the RAF bombing performance in 1941, Professor Frederick Lindemann reported limited British capabilities and even stronger German defenses. Like Harris, he dismissed precision bombing attempts as impractical and ineffectual. Politically it was also the way Britain could convince the Russians that she was doing her part. Harris also despised what he termed “panacea” targets—constantly changing directives demanding a focus on transport, oil, U-boats, or some other identified factor in the German war economy.

Harris consistently argued that strategic area bombing could win the war without the necessity of a cross-channel invasion. This led him to make bold statements such as his startling November 1943 claim, “We can wreck Berlin from end to end if the USAAF will come in on it. It will cost us between 400 and 500 aircraft. It will cost Germany the war.” When Bomber Command pilots flew some thirty-five missions to Berlin between November 1943 and March 1944, however, aircraft and crew losses dramatically outweighed results. Nor did German morale crack, as Harris and others had predicted.

After mid-1944, Harris’s area bombing priority (critics dubbed it an obsession) increasingly diverged from the ideas of Portal, the Air Ministry and Churchill. Though Harris resisted orders to divert his forces to “panacea” targets, once the Allies landed in France, Bomber Command was no longer the primary British war effort. And criticism of continued area bombing effects grew louder as victory neared.

The infamous Dresden attack of February 1945, for example, was requested by the Soviets and ordered by officials senior to Harris—but largely because of it, he and Bomber Command received broad and continuing criticism. By late 1944 and certainly early 1945, Churchill too had turned away from sustained support for Harris’s continued area bombing. Given the progress in the invasion of Europe, such an effort now appeared almost gratuitous to Churchill.

Aftermath

The war’s end brought relief, though also disappointment, to Harris and his fliers. While Churchill commended Bomber Command “as an example of a duty nobly done,” Harris’s final Despatch on War Operations was not published for three decades because of its strong opinions and concerns about the secrecy of some of its contents. The Air Ministry did authorize an Aircrew Europe Star, but not a specific medal for bomber crew.

Disgusted, in part as he felt his fliers were underappreciated, Harris declined an offered peerage. He was promoted to Marshal of the RAF at the start of 1946, departing at age 53 for a business career in South Africa. He was not to return to England for several years.

On Churchill’s return to power, he persuaded Harris to accept a Baronetcy—John Colville wrote that the Air Ministry would not support a peerage. Some felt that this was payback for Harris’s obsessive commitment to area bombing, which by late 1944 had greatly frustrated Portal and other senior officials, and in the years after war had become anathema to many. Another rebuff appeared with the 1961 publication of the official history of the RAF strategic bombing campaign. Written with only limited input by Harris, it criticized many of his decisions. At Harris’s own request, the first book-length biographies appeared only after his death.
In retrospect, it is clear that Arthur Harris’s Bomber Command was essential to Churchill’s war strategy at least through D-Day.\(^{17}\) Until then, RAF bombers attacked Germany as no other British force could. From then on, however, the prime minister exhibited growing unease with area bombing, and with Harris’s unremitting support of that policy. Aside from the moral questions it raised, the human cost had been fearsome: some 55,000 crew were killed in combat. Yet, working with their U.S. allies, Harris’s bombers played a vital role in wearing down Germany. One quiet indicator of the lasting esteem Churchill held for Harris’s service was the invitation by his family to be a pallbearer at Sir Winston’s funeral.\(^{18}\)

**Endnotes**


2. Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, 6 vols. (London: Cassell, 1948-54) notes Harris only in passing at several points in vol. IV; comments on his “vigorous leadership” (V 457), and includes his name in one quoted memo in vol. VI. Several historians have commented upon the dearth of references to Bomber Command and its leader. See for example David Reynolds, *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* (New York: Random House, 2005), 320.

3. Harris was born in India, educated to age 16 in England, and spent his early working years in Rhodesia, before joining the army in South Africa as a bugler in 1914. He returned to England a year later and shifted to the Royal Flying Corps. He served at home and on the Western Front (with five victories to his credit), rising to major by 1918. Between the world wars he served in various RAF posts in the Middle East and India. Details are in Henry Probert, *Bomber Harris: His Life and Times* (London: Greenville, 2001), chapters 1-6.


5. Max Hastings in *Bomber Command* (New York: Dial, 1979) wrote: “For all the courtesies between them, their respect for each other as dedicated warriors, there is no evidence of real personal warmth between Churchill and Harris, or that their meetings had any influence on the priority accorded the bomber offensive…. Churchill, for his part, probably found Harris a convenient tool rather than a convivial companion” (255).


7. Probert, 134.


9. Tami Davis Biddle, “Bombing by the Square Yard: Sir Arthur Harris at War, 1942-1945,” *The International History Re-


15. Webster and Franklyn, passim.


17. Geoffrey Best, *Churchill and War* (London: Hambleton & London, 2005), 284-86 discusses Churchill’s growing unease with the bombing effort, but explains why sacking Harris was never seriously considered, in part because he had become widely popular with the British public.

18. Probert, 399. Harris was unable to serve because of a long-planned trip to South Africa.
**WAAF Driver Irene Kaye**

**LESLEY LEWIS**

Ms. Lewis, who lives in Australia, seeks anyone who knew of her mother. She may be contacted by email: lesleylewis54@yahoo.com.au.

My mother, Irene Constance Kaye (1923-2012), and her sister Eileen, were daughters of a Scarborough, Yorkshire barrister. They made valuable contributions to the war effort, though they remained silent to the end. This was typical of many who served: they never wished to make much of their contributions. I have only a few memories that they shared.

Eileen was a radio operator who spoke rarely about the war, but she did mention “talking” aircrews back home over the English Channel after bombing raids. Irene found herself in a unique circumstance. For a time she served as Prime Minister Winston Churchill’s second RAF driver. She was the WAAF corporal who drove him, often wearing his “boiler suit,” from London to the Air Ministry or airfields like Biggin Hill, usually in the evening through blacked-out streets, navigating by the dim light of blinkered headlamps.

Irene was a reserved girl with a quiet smile, but from the few things she said, she often had a laugh with the great man on late night drives when he was feeling expansive and chatty.

She once “stood him up” by arriving late after lingering too long at a “Frankie Concert” while he waited at Whitehall. This was usually not a good idea with Churchill! But when she apologized, explaining that she’d lost track of time listening to Sinatra, he gave a huge laugh and forgave her.

It was one of her favourite memories, one of the few she recounted in detail. Having been Churchill’s driver was her most precious memory. She utterly revered him throughout her life, and was proud of the occasions when she experienced firsthand his quick wit and sharp intelligence. Occasionally she spoke of long drives in the Blackout, the Prime Minister napping to catch up on lengthy periods without sleep.

Sometimes those drives took them out of London, and she once recalled her embarrassment when she suggested a “loo stop” near a field. The PM laughed and said he’d be happy to “stretch my legs for a few minutes too.” After she had driven him a few times they were relaxed, and chatted about “life in general.”

Corporal Kaye did a lot of night driving, on occasion with General Montgomery or Air Marshal Sholto Douglas as well as Churchill. When she wasn’t driving VIPs she was transporting pilots to Biggin Hill in Humber transport lorries.

One night near Northwood, northwest London, her lorry had a puncture and required a tyre change in pitch dark. She was very slim and slight, and apparently after a few minutes of hooting with laughter at her efforts, some of the boys clam-bered down and helped her.

Many poignant friendships were made in those years. Irene had a friend named Vivienne (I think), also a barrister’s daughter, who flew over France. The last time they met, Vivienne gave her a pair of earrings and asked her to “look after them and wear them.” No more was said. Later Irene learned that Vivienne had never returned.

One of her best WAAF friends was Winnie Ord, who lived in Southend-on-Sea, whom I had the pleasure of visiting in the 1970s. She died some years ago, but she and Mum had kept up a correspondence across the years.

Irene was caught in a few air raids in London during the Blitz and had a permanent horror of underground railway stations—and an enduring penchant for leaving every possible window open—house and car. She had some hair-raising experiences. She once helped a WAAF friend get her mother out of her flat near the Tower of London during an intense raid at the beginning of the Blitz.

She met my father, Leslie William Offley, a serviceman and Londoner who sang and played the double bass. Against the advice of her WAAF friends and family, who told her that he was a “ladies’ man” (and he was), she married Leslie after the war. I was born in 1954, and we emigrated to Australia in 1956.

Perhaps within the reaches of Finest Hour or The Churchill Centre website there will be someone who remembers Irene Kaye. ☺
125 YEARS AGO
Winter 1887-88 • Age 13
“I don’t want to go at all.”

With their parents in Russia, Winston and his brother Jack spent Christmas at 2 Connaught Place with their nanny, Mrs. Everest, and were visited by their Aunt Leonie and Uncle Jack (later Shane) Leslie. In the evening, they went to the Leslies’ home on Stratford Place and played games. Winston had been invited by his grandmother, the Duchess of Marlborough, to spend a week with her at Blenheim over the holiday, but Winston wrote his mother on Boxing Day, “I don’t want to go at all.” His Aunt Leonie obliged him and sent a telegram to Blenheim saying Winston would not be coming.

Leonie’s short telegram apparently arrived just after the Duchess had written her son, Lord Randolph: “I have asked Winston to come to stay a week with me. I would be responsible for him. He wrote me such a nice little letter & I never see him.” After reading Leonie’s telegram she continued: “Just got a Tél from Leonie that Winston is not to be allowed to come & see me! I feel much aggrieved & shall trouble no more about my Gd-Children. I should have thought I was able to take care of him as [well as] Leonie and Clara.”

In the event Winston and Jack both ended up with their grandmother—in London. Mrs. Everest came down with a bad case of diphtheria and could not take care of the boys. Leonie sent another telegram asking for her help, and the Duchess agreed to keep the boys at her town house at 46 Grosvenor Square. She advised Lord Randolph: “I will keep them there until you return. Poor Leonie was much perplexed abt them & glad to telegraph to me in her difficulty so that I am appeased as regards Winston not having been allowed to come [to Blenheim].”

Excerpts of subsequent letters from the Duchess to Randolph illustrate why Winston was not eager to visit her. January 19th: “I fear Winston thinks me very strict, but I really think he goes out too much…. He is so excitable. But he goes back to school on Monday. Meantime, he is affectionate & not naughty & Jack is not a bit of trouble.” January 23rd: “Winston goes back to school today. Entre nous, I do not feel very sorry for he is certainly a handful. Not that he does anything seriously naughty except to use bad language which is bad for Jack.”

To his mother on January 31st, Winston wrote: “I had rather dull holidays but I am sure you will make them up to me.” On March 16th, he passed the entrance exam to Harrow but as Miss Charlotte Thomson wrote to his father: “He has only scraped through.”

100 YEARS AGO
Winter 1912-13 • Age 38
“I was stupid last night.”

With the dispute over Sir Francis Bridgeman’s retirement behind him, Churchill traveled to Toulon on board the Admiralty yacht. There, he and his wife exchanged a series of letters that showed their love for each other. On January 30th he wrote to her:

I was stupid last night—but you know what a prey I am to nerves & prepossessions. It is a great comfort to me to feel absolute confidence in your love & cherishment for your poor P.D. [Pug Dog].

P.S.: I wish you were here; I shd like to kiss your dear face and stroke your baby cheeks and make you purr softly in my arms. Don’t be disloyal to me in thought. I have no one but you to break the loneliness of a bustling & busted existence…X X X Here are three kisses one for each of you. Don’t waste them. They are good ones.

His letter does not indicate why he’d been stupid, but it was sufficient for him to add the emotional postscript. Clementine, not the conventional model of the Edwardian wife, replied with affection but an admonition:

My sweet Darling Winston I love you so much & what I want & enjoy is that you should feel quite comfortable and at home with me—You know I never have any arrière pensée that does not immediately come to the top and boil over; so that when I get excited & cross, I always say more than I feel & mean instead of less—There are never any dregs left behind. The only times I feel a little low is when the breaks in the bustling & busted existence are few and far between. I suppose they are not really few, but I am a very greedy Kat and I like a great deal of cream. I have kept the three precious kisses all to myself, as I appreciate them more than the P.K. [Puppy Kitten = Diana] & C.B. [Chum Belly = Randolph].

Winston Churchill had ruffled the Germans when he referred in 1912 to the German High Seas Fleet as a “luxury,” but a March 12th letter from Hugh Watson, naval attaché in the British Embassy in Berlin, to Eddie Marsh suggests that Churchill’s speeches had had a useful effect:

After a year’s observation of the effects of the 1st Lord’s speeches of last year, I would say there is not a shadow of doubt that they have been a big factor in bringing about a widespread feeling in Germany that Naval competition with England is hopeless and that Germany must stick to her proper arm of defence, the army. Indeed it is true to say that Germans are realizing at present that the Army is the Nation’s life and the Navy a subsidiary, if not a luxury. Views to this effect have been expressed to me quite recently by strong Conservative-agrarians.
Neville Chamberlain is known for his appeasement policies which failed to deter Nazi aggression during 1937-39. Some claim he deserves credit for rearming Great Britain, but privately he repudiated a pledge made by his predecessor, Stanley Baldwin, to maintain air parity with Germany, denying his own Air Ministry’s request for increased expenditures on bombers.

Chamberlain’s Minister for the Coordination of Defence, Thomas Inskip, surveying defense expenditures for the Cabinet on December 22nd, recommended they not be increased, both for economy and because Britain’s foreign policy was aimed at “changing the present assumption as to our potential enemies.” He rejected recommendations of the Air Ministry, even while acknowledging Britain’s inferiority in the air to Germany. Inskip specifically opposed the Air Ministry’s request for additional bombers and attempted to evade the issue of whether this violated Baldwin’s pledge of air parity by disingenuously saying he did not believe Baldwin’s promise compelled Britain “to base either the numbers or the types of our aeroplanes on the numbers and types of a potential enemy.”

Air Minister Swinton strongly objected, telling the Cabinet that his ministry had not “based their proposals on a mere mathematical comparison” with Germany. Rather, they were based on what was necessary to attack German factories and airfields. Not accepting them would constitute a “complete reversal of policy” as established by Baldwin’s air parity pledge and “would have a defeatist appearance.”

Chamberlain defended Inskip, saying he did not accept that air parity was still essential, and told the Cabinet: “No pledge can last forever.”

Churchill’s low opinion of the PM’s intellect and ability is borne out in the official biography. Sir Martin Gilbert writes that Chamberlain, having read The House That Hitler Built, by the Australian political economist and historian Stephen Roberts, wrote to his sister that it was “an extremely clever and well-informed but very pessimistic book…If I accepted the author’s conclusions, I should despair, but I don’t and I won’t.”

The book was not an anti-Nazi diatribe. Roberts was a respected scholar who had spent more than eighteen months in Germany researching his book as a guest of the government. The Nazis, according to Roberts, “did everything possible to aid my investigations even though they knew from the outset my attitude was one of objective criticism.”

Among other things, The House That Hitler Built exploded the myth of Hitler’s “economic miracle.” Roberts presciently warned that Hitler’s policy of autarky (“economic mobilization of all the country’s resources”), if unchanged, would “lead to war…unless Hitler modifies his teachings and methods or unless there is a peaceful transition to some other regime.” If it did not “learn the habit of political and economic collaboration in international matters,” Germany would be “confronted by ultimate ruin.”

Why did Chamberlain reject Roberts’ conclusions? As he explained to his sister, he had a new idea (a “scintillation”) which had been “promptly and even enthusiastically” accepted by all those he told it to: offering Germany the African colonies she had lost at Versailles! But unlike Churchill, Chamberlain had never been to Germany or Africa and, apparently, was ignorant of Mein Kampf, where Hitler had no interest in the lost colonies.

Less than a month later, Germany intimidated Austria into changing its cabinet and Anthony Eden resigned as Foreign Secretary over Chamberlain’s decision to recognize the Italian conquest of Abyssinia. On February 22nd, Churchill told the Commons:

This has been a good week for Dictators. It is one of the very best they have ever had. The German Dictator has laid his heavy hand upon a small but historic country, and the Italian Dictator has carried his vendetta to a victorious conclusion against my Rt. Hon. friend the late Foreign Secretary.

The conflict between the Italian Dictator and my Rt. Hon. friend has been a long one. There can be no doubt, however, who has won. Signor Mussolini has won. All the might, majesty, dominion and power of the British Empire was no protection to my Rt. Hon. friend. Signor Mussolini has got his scalp.

Less than three weeks later on 12 March 1938, Hitler’s armies invaded Austria and it was swallowed by the Reich. Years before when he had left Austria, Hitler declared: “I felt in the depth of my soul that it was my vocation and my mission given to me by destiny that I should bring my home country back to the great German Reich.” He made no mention of Africa.

Sir Martin Gilbert wrote that 1963 was “a year of serene yet sad decline.” In a letter to the British Ambassador to Germany, Anthony Montague Brown described Sir Winston as “somewhat lethargic and indifferent to events.” He continued to see old friends. Lady Violet Bonham Carter was a frequent visitor, dining with him on February 20th and March 14th, lunching on February 9th, 22nd, and March 12th. In a letter to Sir Martin in March, she wrote that WSC’s mind was “drifting further & further away alas! Remembering it as I do in its full glory I am agonized.”

Sir Winston attended another meeting of the Other Club in February. On March 5th, he sent an appreciative letter to Lord Beaverbrook, saying that the Canadian’s new book, The Decline and Fall of Lloyd George, would be of “enormous value to historians.”
Since 1905, when Alexander MacCallum Scott produced his account of an exciting 30-year-old Liberal MP named Winston Churchill, biographies of Britain’s greatest statesman have proliferated. One bibliographer cataloged twenty-six biographies published in Churchill’s lifetime; another, thirty-six between Churchill’s death in 1965 and the end of the 20th century. And that is just counting the ones written in English.

The 21st century has seen no diminution. Churchill loved a good race and might appreciate the steady efforts made by his chroniclers to overtake major historical figures such as Abraham Lincoln and Napoleon Bonaparte in >>

Professor Freeman teaches History at California State University Fullerton.
the multiple-biography sweepstakes. But where should readers begin?

I am often asked to recommend a good Churchill biography. Before answering, I consider the potential reader’s background and ask questions about what sort of book is sought. More information is required than simply whether the reader seeks an introductory work or a serious academic study. Probably the most important question has to do with length.

Broadly speaking, Churchill biographies come in five different categories of length: brief, short, medium, long (but still single-volume) and multi-volume. Additionally, there are two special cases. Mentally, I regularly update what I consider the best book in each category so as to have good answers at the ready.

Before running down the list, one thing needs to be made clear. I am discussing only traditional biographies and not critical or specialized studies, of which there are also many both good and bad. That said, here is my current survey of Churchill biographies:

Brief works (100-200 pages) were all the rage at the turn of the century. Often now they are published as part of a series with themes such as “prime ministers,” “world leaders” or “great lives.” Few people know that Sir Martin Gilbert’s first book about Churchill was such a book published in 1966.

At this time, the best in this class is by Paul Addison, longtime Finest Hour contributor. Entitled simply Winston Churchill, it was written for the current Dictionary of National Biography, which can be found in large libraries but is also available online by subscription. In 2007, Oxford University Press published Addison’s entry on Churchill as a separate volume in a series called “VIP: Very Interesting People.” Sadly, this book is now out of print, but can easily be found in the second-hand book market (see bookfinder.com).

Short works (200-300 pages) are fewer than you might think. Former Keeper of the Churchill Archives Centre Piers Brendon published one in 1984, but the best at present is also by Paul Addison. Churchill the Unexpected Hero is an expanded version (about twice as long) of Addison’s entry for the Dictionary of National Biography. The late John Ramsden, author of the acclaimed specialty work on the Churchill legend and the official history of the Conservative Party in the 20th century, described Addison’s book in these pages as the best of the short biographies “by a long way.” This too is now out of print but also readily available from second-hand book dealers.

Medium works (300-500 pages) until recently were led in my opinion by Norman Rose’s 1994 biography, Churchill: An Unruly Giant. However, there is a new champion: Ashley Jackson’s 2011 work entitled simply Churchill (reviewed FH 154: 59). As with Addison’s books in the above categories, Jackson’s work far outdistances any others of comparable length. Still, honorable mention must go to Robert Lewis Taylor’s classic Winston Churchill: An Informal Study of Greatness (1952), which is beautifully written and common in the used-book market.

Long works (500+ pages) include a lot of old standards, such as those by Henry Pelling (1974) and Roy Jenkins (2001). Without doubt, though, the best is by none other than Martin Gilbert. Published in 1991, Churchill: A Life is not, as many wrongly believe, a condensed version of the official biography. It is an entirely original work. Especially important are the early chapters covering the years written about in the official biography by Churchill’s son Randolph. Time and distance from his subject, along with the discovery of new information, enabled Gilbert to write about Churchill’s youth with more detail and accuracy than can be found in any other biography.

“Juveniles” (books for young readers) divide on the basis of the age level they are pitched to: What is good for a 10-year-old may not be good for a 14-year-old, and vice versa. This makes them difficult to compare. My favorite is a comic book—or “graphic novel” in the jargon of today’s youth. The Happy Warrior first appeared as a serial during the 1950s in the pages of the Eagle, a comic magazine for boys published in England by the Rev. Marcus Morris, with a story by Clifford Makins, and splendid illustrations by Frank Bellamy. In its new Levenger edition, with an introduction by Richard Langworth and much finer production quality, The Happy Warrior is a remarkably accurate account of Churchill’s life up to his retirement as Prime Minister in 1955.

Multi-volume works were pioneered by Lewis Broad when Churchill was still very much alive. Unquestionably the best entry so far is The Last Lion, the lyrical three-volume work started by the late William Manchester with volume 1 in 1983 and volume 2 in 1988; the final volume is now published with the pen of Paul Reid (see page 6).

Manchester described his absorbing work as a “literary biography,” which meant he occasionally preferred a good story to the actual facts. Nevertheless, he was a master stylist and this is probably the most popular Churchill biography ever published—and rightly so.

I call the next work “Olympian” because it stands alone: the eight-volume Official Biography started by Randolph Churchill (volumes 1 and 2) and completed by Martin Gilbert (volumes 3-8). The Companion Volumes to this work (see below) are still being produced. This is the Churchill biography par excellence and the one I would take to any desert island. Most people, perhaps, see it as primarily for academics, but Gilbert’s you-are-there style takes the reader fully into Churchill’s life, which was never dull, and is frequently electrifying.

For the ultimate Churchill junkie, there are the Official Biography Companion Volumes (sixteen and counting), containing thousands upon thousands of documents related to Churchill’s life. They offer supreme pleasure. I have dipped into them many times for research purposes and always end up making new and fascinating discoveries. Did you know that Churchill recommended his personal speech therapist to the Prince of Wales in 1929 soon after the Prince’s younger brother began seeing the therapist Lionel Logue in the
story now made famous by the Oscar-winning film The King’s Speech? Or that soon after becoming Prime Minister in 1940, Churchill sent an offer of asylum (politely declined) to the ex-Kaiser, who was still living in the Netherlands as that country was overrun by Hitler’s armies?

Hillsdale College Press has brought all of these masterfully compiled treasures of history back into print. Get them while they last.

Hillsdale College Press has brought all of these masterfully compiled treasures of history back into print. Get them while they last.

One-offs: Jessie Borthwick’s Bust and a Unique Marquetry Plaque

Mr. Morrison, of High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, is a member of the Churchill Centre UK.

Topped by an Eisenhower-like forehead, the Borthwick bust (left) was very popular during the war; Mr. Morrison thinks his version (right) is Borthwick’s original casting.

In 1940, a Churchill bust sculpted by Jessie Borthwick and made of Parian Ware china was widely marketed, but I think I own the original. Whereas the commercial busts are finished china, my 10-inch-high example is plaster and bears Borthwick’s signature, as well as the date of July 1940. Unlike the china versions, the plinth does not carry the inscription that I later found on the Parian china version: “FINEST HOUR 157 / 46”

“The Winston Spencer-Churchill.”

I acquired the bust in 1976. It was originally in the office of a Lincolns Inn Fields firm of solicitors, and when the firm closed my father, who was managing clerk, was allowed to save the bust from the rubbish skip.

It is almost identical to the Parian china version which was reproduced in 1940, but with subtle differences; it has wear suggesting that a cast was made from it for the china busts. I believe it to be the prototype produced by Jessie Borthwick. No one I have contacted, including Chartwell, has ever come across another like it.

Jessie Borthwick, an extraordinary woman, filmed and recorded the battlefields of the Balkan Wars and then served as a nurse in the Great War. Her family had links to Churchill which went back to when he was a reporter for the Morning Post. She died in 1946.

The “Antiques Almanac” website (http://xrl.us/bny6aq) notes: “The marble-like beauty of Parian Ware captivated Victorians. It allowed the middle classes to possess articles of high art.
And by the end of the 19th Century, every properly furnished Victorian parlor contained at least one piece of it. Victorians welcomed Parian’s inexpensive, small-scale copies of busts of literary and political figures, as well as its decorative vases, boxes and pitchers, adorning their homes with these ornaments to show their gentility. It’s been said that Parian had the same effect on statuary as the invention of the print to painting.”

I have also acquired a marquetry wall plaque which, due to its fine detail, makes me feel that this is an “apprentice piece” which is also unique. I acquired it about fifteen years ago and have never encountered another. According to Hall, most Churchill marquetry was produced in the form of trays, which, unlike pictures, were exempt from purchase tax.

This piece is however a plaque—but it may be one of a kind.

I hope these two items will be appreciated by collectors of Churchilliana, and that more information may be forthcoming from readers.

____________________________________
LONDON, 1940

“Churchill...drew his pistol and with great satisfaction, for it was a notoriously inaccurate weapon, shot dead the first German to reach the foot of the steps....A burst of bullets from a machine-carbine caught the Prime Minister full in the chest. He died instantly, his back to Downing Street, his face toward the enemy, his pistol still in his hand.”


Later that afternoon with the Germans already in Trafalgar Square and advancing down Whitehall to take their position in the rear, the enemy unit advancing across St. James’s Park made their final charge. Several of those in the Downing Street position were already dead...and at last the Bren ceased its chatter, its last magazine emptied. Churchill reluctantly abandoned the machine-gun, drew his pistol and with great satisfaction, for it was a notoriously inaccurate weapon, shot dead the first German to reach the foot of the steps.

“As two more rushed forward, covered by a third in the distance, Winston Churchill moved out of the shelter of the sandbags, as if personally to bar the way up Downing Street. A German NCO, running up to find the cause of the unexpected hold-up, recognised him and shouted to the soldiers not to shoot, but he was too late. A burst of bullets from a machine-carbine caught the Prime Minister full in the chest. He died instantly, his back to Downing Street, his face toward the enemy, his pistol still in his hand.”

This chilling vision is the highlight of Norman Longmate’s recently republished thriller. But his fancied action of a successful German invasion in 1940 is entirely believable, and thus all the more frightening. Based on a BBC1 television film of the same name, If Britain Had Fallen was conceived by Lord Chalfont, Basil Collier and Richard Wade.

This is not the first book to contemplate a German occupation of the British Isles: there was Erskine Childers’ The Riddle of the Sands (1903), H.H. Munro’s When William Came (1913) and C.S. Forester’s If Hitler had Invaded England (1967). But previous works covered just one phase of the subject—preparations, landings or campaigns. Longmate covers them all. He was the first author to do so.

The first four chapters describe German/British pre-invasion manoeuvring. The last thirteen describe in “an entirely non-fictional way what the German occupation would have been like, by reference to captured documents and by the record of how the Germans actually behaved in other countries, especially the one small corner of Britain they did occupy, the Channel Islands.

Only three chapters are entirely fictional. The plot here hinges on what was in fact the crux of the Battle of Britain: Hermann Goering’s decision to stop attacking military targets in an attempt to cow the populace by bombing open cities. In this book, Goering behaves the opposite way (which does not allow for the actual deciding factor, an infuriated Hitler ordering London to be leveled).

Then the Luftwaffe chief orders his forces to redouble their efforts:

Knock out the radar stations, then the forward airfields, then the main fighter stations and sector and group headquarters. Every bomb and every bullet was to be aimed at an RAF target. The renewed attack on the radar chain took Fighter Command by surprise and soon ominous gaps were appearing on the plotting boards at 11 Group Headquarters at Uxbridge and at Fighter Command at Bentley Priory, Stanmore...And, final proof that the RAF was losing the battle, the Stuka dive-bombers again flew far inland and got safely home.

Longmate next refers to German documents and plans for “Operation Sea Lion,” and mounts the Nazi offensive on “S-Day,” 24 September 1940, in the small hours under a bright moon. Landings are made from Dover to Lyme Regis, supported by swarms of Junker 88s and Messerschmitts, which “ranged the skies over Britain at will.” Rapidly, the Wehrmacht seals off the Kentish coast and establishes a line from Margate to Brighton. Soon the entire peninsula from Woolwich to Southampton has been occupied, and the Royal Family reluctantly leaves London—followed by the Downing Street scene described above.

We will not spoil a minor nightmare by describing what happens then. Of course, Jews are rounded up; the fascist Sir Oswald Mosley is asked to be Britain’s Quisling. What happens to the King and the government? What would America have done in the event? Would Canada and Australia have been able to come to the rescue? Would the British people have come to accept the occupation—even feel hostile toward the resistance fighters? Would the deportation of friends, the flying of the swastika from Buckingham Palace, incite docility—or resistance? Get a copy and find out! This is a non-essential but thought-provoking addition to the Churchill library.
An old argument in Cold War history holds that if only Truman had been nicer to Stalin at the end of World War II, the subsequent Cold War might have been avoided or mitigated. A professor of history at the University of Connecticut now takes up this thesis anew, arguing that the death of Franklin Roosevelt removed the one personality who could have reassured Stalin sufficiently to produce a more agreeable postwar world.

Following Roosevelt’s death during the closing days of the war in Europe, Harry Truman became responsible for American foreign policy. Lacking any knowledge or experience of dealing with the Soviet leader, he relied on the advice of American diplomats who had served in Moscow, such as Averell Harriman and George Kennan. After witnessing many of Stalin’s atrocities and betrayal of agreements, the State Department’s “Soviet experts” counseled stern confrontation with the Kremlin boss. According to Costigliola, the notoriously insecure Stalin mainly wanted to safeguard his country against another German invasion—playing “the Cold War card…was not his first choice.”

After being challenged by Truman, however, and with the slightly sympathetic Churchill removed from power by election, the Russian leader felt constrained to take the steps he believed necessary to safeguard his country. This meant the brutal occupation of east-central Europe and the development of the nuclear arms race.

Roosevelt, it is argued, would have looked past Stalin’s atrocities and the violation of some pledges in order to achieve the greater good of a less confrontational world. A comparable example that did come to pass was Richard Nixon’s decision to open a dialogue with Communist China despite the horrifying record of Mao Tse-tung.

That at least is the theory, but counterfactual speculation is not history. Costigliola’s argument can never be proven or disproven. Tellingly, it primarily finds support among those with highly favorable opinions of Roosevelt, and dances around the grey region between respect and idolatry. Even Harriman appears to have repented of his role in the early Cold War and to have given credence to the theory, by saying if Roosevelt had lived things could well have been different, because, Harriman said, “Roosevelt could lead the world.”

Anthony Eden once stated flatly that “the deplorable turning point in the whole relationship of the Western Allies with the Soviet Union was caused directly by the death of Roosevelt.” But there are many problems with this idea, including the need of Eden and Harriman to protect their reputations.

It does not follow that any new agreements made by Roosevelt and Stalin would have held any more than the wartime agreements already violated, or that the Soviet establishment necessarily would go along with everything the aging Stalin pledged. Churchill is criticized for promoting a postwar Anglo-American alliance that fed Stalin’s paranoia. What else was Churchill to do? Lend-Lease and Marshall Aid were not coming from Moscow. And in their absence, whither western Europe?

Costigliola emphasizes the personal element of diplomacy, an area in which Roosevelt was unsurpassed. Thus, the President’s cardinal error in this account seems to have been not taking better care of himself and alienating advisers who could take a broad view of Stalin. But how would FDR have coped with an opposition-controlled Congress after 1946? Could he have bent it to his will while Stalin achieved similar success with the Red Army and the Politburo? Certainly personalities matter in negotiations; but the powers behind those personalities matter more.

Premiers in Waiting

Leaders of the Opposition: From Churchill to Cameron, ed. Timothy Heppell, hardbound, 288 pages, $95, Kindle edition $76.

The British Parliament has an opposition party with a shadow cabinet that serves as an alternate government should the ruling party resign or lose office. The effectiveness and changing role of postwar opposition leaders are examined in case studies by fifteen British political scholars headed by Timothy Heppell of the University of Leeds. Like all too many scholarly books, it is priced far too high.
Of the sixteen leaders herein, equally divided between Conservatives and Labourites, nine became prime minister. Three postwar premiers—Macmillan, Eden and Gordon Brown—are excluded because they succeeded colleagues and did not lead the Opposition. Also left out are John Major, who served only seven weeks as a caretaker after losing the 1997 election; current opposition leader Ed Miliband; and three acting leaders who served only briefly.

If many British prime ministers are obscure, the seven opposition leaders who never made it to the top are even more so, especially for American audiences, though Neil Kinnock has some brief claim to fame for being plagiarized by U.S. Vice-President Joe Biden when Biden ran for president in 1988 (145).

In his introduction, Heppell explains the use of concepts advanced by political science professor Fred Greenstein of Princeton to consider how opposition parties prepare to assume power, judging each leader as communicator, architect of a policy, and manager of the party, and by his emotional intelligence. An excellent performance in opposition, he notes, does not necessarily make for an excellent prime minister—or vice versa.

Keven Theakston, author of Winston Churchill and the British Constitution (reviewed, FH 124, 2004) and the brief life Winston Churchill (FH 156, 2012), wrote this book’s Churchill chapter, observing that WSC and Harold Wilson were the only postwar former prime ministers to lead their parties back to power. For the Tories. the scale of defeat in 1945 was huge and the comeback slow, a gain of 88 seats in 1950 leaving them still a few votes behind Labour. The following year they achieved a narrow majority.

Theakston concedes that no other Tory leader would have done better. None had Churchill’s prestige, he says, though Churchill was somewhat miscast as opposition leader, since his return to power came despite him rather than because of him. (Really?) Churchill was a part-time leader, Theakston says, busy writing his memoirs and often traveling abroad, where the war had made him a figure of stature. He delegated party management to others, such as Anthony Eden, who often chaired meetings and spoke for the Opposition in Parliament. Churchill, so notable for his lightning parties at “Question Time,” was really a celebrity virtuoso soloist rather than the leader of an orchestra (18).

Heppell ends by exploring factors that make for effective Opposition, such as when a longstanding government, headed by a tired prime minister like Gordon Brown, is assailed by a dynamic opponent, such as David Cameron in 2010. He considers also “strategic repositioning” with appeals to moderate voters, as practiced by Churchill in 1950-51 and Tony Blair in 1997. The role of the leader has changed, Heppell concludes, with more focus now on personality in a media-driven age, more centralized party control, and reduced tolerance for failure. It is no longer possible, he avers, for a leader like Churchill, who lost elections in 1945 and 1950, to survive in a passive role. Finally, Heppell notes, there has been a decline of positional or class-based politics, a move toward “valence politics” based on the apparent competence or likeability of a leader.

The book has a good index and an impressive bibliography but no illustrations. The reader should also note the use of in-text references listed parenthetically instead of standard footnotes or endnotes. There are also some typos in the chapters on Edward Heath and John Smith (83, 152). 

ABOUT BOOKS

“Stormy Petrel of Politics”
Dorothy Thompson’s Ode to Churchill

RONALD I. COHEN

Reader Arthur Lee asks: “Was the Dorothy Thompson introduction in the second American issue of Churchill’s A Roving Commission ever reprinted? “If not, it should be.”

Dorothy Thompson (1893-1961) was a prominent writer and broadcaster, referred to in her heyday as “the First Lady of American Journalism.” Her three husbands included the Nobel Prize winning novelist Sinclair Lewis. In 1939, Time magazine named her the second most influential woman in America next to Eleanor Roosevelt.

In reissuing A Roving Commission (U.S. title of My Early Life) in 1939, it was therefore natural for Scribners to ask Dorothy Thompson to write a new introduction. The Second American issue had only two printings, and subsequent appearances of the title dropped the Thompson introduction; copies are today quite scarce, particularly in their distinctive orange and blue dust jackets.

War had only just broken out between Britain and Germany when Thompson sat down to write, blithely ignoring the fact that American involvement in the war was hotly opposed by the bulk of U.S. opinion. Given the hour, her words were less in praise of Churchill’s masterful autobiography than of Churchill himself—brave words under the circumstances, but Scribners evidently made no attempt to tone them down. Her appraisal of Churchill is at once arresting and in some respects unique. >>

Mr. Shepherd is Associate Archivist, Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C..
It is not often that the First Lord of the Admiralty of any nation is also a writer of fine prose. Winston Churchill is one of the finest living writers of English prose. He is a stormy petrel of politics. For the past decade he has been the most pugnacious, eloquent, and scathing critic of British policy. He happens to have been right, and that is the reason he is again in the Cabinet at last.

Mr. Churchill is the kind of Englishman who cannot be classified according to his political ideas. He is too gifted and too brilliant to be disposed of by calling him a Tory—or by any other appellation. He believes with almost religious intensity that the English spirit in its finest manifestations is the world's greatest hope for decency and freedom. He also, like Hitler, believes in the leadership principle, but unlike Hitler, he believes in noblesse oblige.

He is a doubtful democrat. His spirit is Aristotelian; he believes in aristocratic government on the wide basis of popular consent, and he would define an aristocrat as a man who is willing to take upon himself, with no thought of gain or fame, the responsibilities which the weaker shun.

He believes that leadership cannot and should not be forced. It must accrue to a man on the strength of his record. He must not usurp responsibility—the usurpation of power is gangsterism, in Mr. Churchill’s mind.

The British aristocratic tradition whereby only the oldest son inherits the lands and title has resulted in a great many younger sons who have had to use their wits—and England has profited from this. Winston Churchill’s father, Lord Randolph Churchill, the third son of the seventh Duke of Marlborough, became an eminent statesman. His son, although he belongs by birth to the English aristocracy, is not rich and has always had to earn his living. He has been a soldier, a journalist and a politician; he has been a perennial Cabinet Minister and Member of Parliament, is Lord Rector and Chancellor of two universities, and he is now, for the second time, First Lord of the Admiralty. But always he has been a writer, and his works include journalism, political biography and some of our best modern history.

Of a scintillating and sometimes devastating intelligence, a political maverick, a viveur with a gusty love of life and an unmitigated passion for England, Mr. Churchill is one of the most colorful figures on the international scene. Although he is now sixty-five years old, he seems cast in the mold of youth and is younger than the generation who could be his sons.

It would be impossible to imagine England without him.

—DOROTHY THOMPSON
14 October 1939

Mr. Cohen is Churchill’s leading bibliographer and founder of the Churchill Society of Ottawa.
Each quiz offers questions in six categories: Churchill contemporaries (C), literary matters (L), miscellaneous (M), personal details (P), statesmanship (S) and war (W), the easier questions first. Can you reach Level 1?

LEVEL 4

1. WSC to Harry Hopkins, 13 April 1945: “I feel with you that we have lost one of our greatest friends…” Who had been lost? (C)

2. In which speech did Churchill say, “God bless you all. This is your victory! It is the victory of the cause of freedom in every land. In all our long history we have never seen a greater day than this”? (M)

3. Name one of four leading British writers who gave Churchill personally-signed copies of their books. (L)

4. How old was Churchill when he became Prime Minister for the first time? (P)

5. Whom did Robert Kennedy ask to write the biography of John F. Kennedy? (M)

6. The A20 heavy infantry tank, built by the Northern Irish shipbuilders Harland and Wolff in 1940, became better known later by what name? (W)

7. Of whom did Churchill say in 1952 that he “walked with death, as if death were a companion, an acquaintance, whom he recognized and did not fear”? (C)

8. Name any of the six books which the Swedish Academy singled out for praise when Churchill won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1953. (L)

9. Whom did Winston and Clementine refer to as “the Chum Bolly”? (P)

10. In which of his books did Churchill write: “It was a curious education. First because I approached it with an empty, hungry mind, and with fairly strong jaws; and what I got I bit”? (L)

11. Who was invited to the Oxford Union in the Michaelmas term of 1920 to defend the record of the government? (P)

12. What did Churchill mean when he said at Chartwell, “Let her go”? (M)

13. In the 1930s, whom did Churchill refer to as “Mrs P”? (M)

14. In which expedition did WSC often say at the end of the day “Safari so goody”? (M)

15. Who said in a broadcast in 1945: “Back in 1941, Mr. Churchill said to me with tears in his eyes, ‘One day the world and history will recognize and acknowledge what it owes to your President’”? (C)

16. Following which 1942 disaster did WSC broadcast: “We must remember that we are no longer alone. We are in the midst of a great company. Three-quarters of the human race are now moving with us… Let us move forward steadfastly together into the storm…”? (W)

LEVEL 3

17. When Churchill told Congress, “What kind of a people do they think we are?” who were “they”? (W)

18. Where did WSC say: “We have not journeyed all this way across the centuries, across the oceans, across the mountains, across the prairies, because we are made of sugar candy”? (S)

19. In which WW2 speech did WSC say: “There is no room for the dilettante, the weakling, for the shirker, or the sluggard. The mine, the factory, the dockyard, the hospital, the chair of the scientist, the pulpit of the preacher—from the highest to the humblest tasks, all are of equal honour; all have their part to play”? (W)

20. In which year did Prime Minister Churchill say that the policy of the Tory Party should be “Houses and meat and not being scuppered”? (S)

21. Where was WSC when he said in 1952: “We shall provide against and thus prevail over the dangers and problems of the future, withhold no sacrifice, grudge no toil, seek no sordid gain, fear no foe”? (S)

22. Where was he in 1901 when he wrote his mother: “Last night a magnificent audience of men in evening dress, & ladies half out of it, filled a fine opera house”? (P)

23. When and where was Churchill’s only meeting with Theodore Roosevelt? (C)

24. When did Churchill say in a speech in Washington: “Your majestic obliteration of all you gave us under Lend-Lease will never be forgotten by this generation in Britain, or by history”? (S)

ANSWERS

1. President Franklin Roosevelt, who had died 1 January 1945. The speech was broadcast to the world on the 20th anniversary of the dedication of the New York City memorial to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Dr. Henry Habens, Tawwur, said at Chartwell, “Let her go”? (M)

2. The A20 heavy infantry tank, built by the Northern Irish shipbuilders Harland and Wolff in 1940, became better known later by what name? (W)

3. Name any of the six books which the Swedish Academy singled out for praise when Churchill won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1953. (L)

4. How old was Churchill when he became Prime Minister for the first time? (P)

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23. When and where was Churchill’s only meeting with Theodore Roosevelt? (C)

24. When did Churchill say in a speech in Washington: “Your majestic obliteration of all you gave us under Lend-Lease will never be forgotten by this generation in Britain, or by history”? (S)
The complexities and ambiguities of the three-cornered special relationship between Britain, France and the United States were nothing new in 1940. Arguably they can be traced to the American War of Independence, when the King of France, no friend of liberty, supported the rebels with the obvious intention of being nasty to the King of England. The Lafayette mythology conceals unavowable motives, and the discrepancy between professions of altruistic friendship and the realpolitik of selfish national interests was always present after 1783. Its main manifestation before the period we consider here was the Paris Peace Conference in 1918-19, with two of the three countries having borne the brunt of the war, and one the greatest devastation of its national territory.

Churchill, Roosevelt and de Gaulle drew totally different conclusions from the proceedings of the Conference; its outcome, the Versailles Treaty of June 1919; and the failure of the United States Senate to ratify it in March 1920. Rightly or wrongly, Charles de Gaulle drew at least four important conclusions from the episode, and they remained ingrained in his mind until his death.

1) The close military alliance between Britain and France during the War, born of the Entente Cordiale beginning in 1904, was something of the past; yet France would never again be able to dispense with Britain if German power was to be contained.

2) There had been clear collusion between the American President and the British Prime Minister, twisting Clemenceau’s arm until he withdrew his proposed clause on the annexation of the Rhineland in exchange for a dual guarantee protecting France against renewed German invasion under President Wilson’s pet idea, the League of Nations.

3) The vote in the United States Senate left France without the promised guarantee, especially when Lloyd George then said that his own commitment was de facto null and void, and proved to him that one should never entrust one’s safety to allies.

4) National interests—real or perceived—were now the foundation of international relations, based on the military balance of power more than brave proclamations of internationalism and pacifism.

Now let us compare that with Churchill’s famous theme of the first volume of his war memoirs, The Gathering Storm (1948):

How the English-speaking peoples
Through their unwisdom
Carelessness and good nature
Allowed the wicked
To rearm
Churchill’s specific reference to “the English-speaking peoples” in a way vindicated de Gaulle’s perception of what had taken place at the Paris Peace Conference, and more generally in the inter-war years. In 1939, observing the impotence and ultimate failure of the League of Nations—in which he never believed (nor in the United Nations after it), de Gaulle did blame what was not yet called the Special Relationship for having “allowed the wicked to rearm.” But he did not believe in their “good nature.” For the reasons already indicated, he thought that great powers have no transcendent morality: the only rules they knew were those of sheer force.

Once caught, twice shy. During the “Phoney War,” in which he served as a tank colonel, de Gaulle’s attitude towards “the Anglo-Saxons,” as he liked to call “the English-speaking peoples,” was twofold: Trust in Britain’s resilience, thanks to its vast Empire and seemingly invincible Navy, which he both admired and envied; and a conviction (shared by Chamberlain) that nothing useful could be expected of the United States. Contrary therefore to French Premier Paul Reynaud in May-June 1940, de Gaulle never pinned his hopes on a last-minute miraculous American intervention on the side of “the democracies,” as the U.S. press referred to them.

When President Roosevelt recognised the Vichy régime as the only legitimate government of France and sent his personal friend, Admiral Leahy, as Ambassador, de Gaulle’s worst doubts were confirmed. At least, he considered, Britain and Vichy had broken official relations after Britain disabled most of the French fleet at Oran. And yet a proud, haughty man like de Gaulle had to go begging for war equipment for his Free French Forces—with some success in Britain, which had little to spare, but very limited results in Washington.

Like everyone else, de Gaulle feared that the Red Army would fail to contain the German invasion after June 1941 and, apparently for the first time, he thought that the United States would be forced to enter the war. Like Churchill and most of the European leaders of their generation, de Gaulle always believed in the “Germany first” approach.

For de Gaulle, America’s entry into the war was good news and bad news. He had correctly predicted in his first BBC speech, on 18 June 1940, that “immense forces have not yet been unleashed”—a clear allusion to the USA and USSR. Now they were—and on the side of his Free French—and this was fine.

The bad news was that the Anglo-Saxon Special Relationship would receive a tremendous boost—and de Gaulle’s worst fears were confirmed when Churchill immediately rushed to Washington to express what de Gaulle saw as unconditional allegiance.

Now, de Gaulle was no long-term visionary. He had not understood that the Imperial ideal, if you can call it an ideal, was no longer tenable. His wartime speeches are full of glowing allusions to the French Empire and its bright future after the war. In this he should have found an objective ally in Churchill against Roosevelt, but the old colonial disputes with Britain still rankled and he everywhere saw British plots to dislodge France from her “possessions.”

It would be idle to attempt to draw a full list of the misunderstandings with Churchill and the snubs, real or imagined, from Roosevelt; but by June 1944, on the eve of the Normandy Landings, it seems clear that de Gaulle harbored a paranoia whose main element was the perceived “Anglo-Saxon” plot to eliminate France from the ranks of the great powers.

In their memoirs, both Churchill and de Gaulle recount their stormy meeting on 4 June 1944 when, according to de Gaulle, Churchill delivered the fateful words: “Mark this—on each occasion that we shall have to choose between Europe and the open seas, we will always choose the open seas. On each occasion that I shall have to choose between you and Roosevelt, I will always choose Roosevelt.”

Churchill does not report these words, but he describes the Frenchman’s reaction: “de Gaulle replied that he quite understood that if the U.S.A. and France disagreed, Britain would side with the U.S.A. With this ungracious remark the interview ended.”

We also have the magnificent and cynical testimony of Sir Alexander Cadogan, who was part of Churchill’s entourage, in his diary entry for the 5th of June: “It’s a girls’ school. Roosevelt, P.M. and—it must be admitted de G.—all behave like girls approaching puberty. Nothing to be done.”

De Gaulle’s view was reinforced at Yalta, when it seemed clear to him that the interests of what was not yet known as the Free World were being defined and defended by the Anglo-Saxons. He was distressed that France had not been consulted on the future of Germany, a question of capital importance for France’s security after three successive Franco-German wars fought on its soil. That Churchill volunteered to give a zone of occupation to France, taken from Britain’s allocation, was only seen by de Gaulle as a reflection on his calculating mind.

Thus, in de Gaulle’s eyes, the Anglo-Saxons’ “plot” to thwart the recovery of France in 1945 was just a predictable repeat of their attitude in 1919-20. His duty, as he put in on the first page of volume II concluded on page 62...
Britain and America:  
A Special and Essential Relationship

Ambassador to the Court of St. James’s The Honourable Louis Susman, in his first formal address after his appointment, told the Pilgrims Society in London: “In war and peace, in prosperity and in time of economic hardship, America has no better friend and no more dependable ally than the United Kingdom.”

And again:
“Our nations are deeply rooted in our enduring values of democracy, rule of law and tolerance; a shared history, culture and language, and a mutual ability and willingness to bring real diplomatic, financial and military assets to the table for joint action to promote and defend our common interests....While the United States of America—and this Ambassador—has many priorities, my principal priority will be to strengthen and nourish this Special Relationship, which is so critical to the United States.”

In a joint article on 24 May 2011, President Obama and Prime Minister Cameron pointed to the close relationship between our two countries, saying it is vital beyond Britain and America:

When the United States and Britain stand together, our people and people around the world can become more secure and more prosperous.

And that is the key to our relationship. Yes, it is founded on a deep emotional connection, by sentiment and ties of people and culture. But the reason it thrives, the reason why this is such a natural partnership, is because it advances our common interests and shared values.

It is a perfect alignment of what we both need and what we both believe. And the reason it remains strong is because it delivers time and again. Ours is not just a Special Relationship, it is an essential relationship—for us and for the world.

On the following day, addressing both Houses of Parliament, after the introductory pleasantries, the first point the President made was this: “Our relationship is special because of the values and beliefs that have united our people throughout the ages. Centuries ago, when kings, emperors, and warlords reigned over much of the world, it was the English who first spelled out the rights and liberties of man in Magna Carta.”

Pause and think a moment. Here was the President of the United States giving one of the defining speeches of his Presidency, about human rights and the rule of law, and his very first point of reference is his reference to the Special Relationship, with its roots in Magna Carta, sealed at Runnymede on 15 June 1215, nearly 800 years ago.

From the start of the last century, certainly recognised in the 1902 founding of the Pilgrims Society, the Anglo-American Special Relationship has been in force, no matter how often denied in the media and by the occasional politician or diplomat. No two

Sir Robert Worcester KBE DL is Chancellor and Honorary Professor of Politics at the University of Kent, and founder of Market & Opinion Research International (MORI). The best-known pollster in Britain, he is a frequently quoted political analyst.
countries have ever before worked together in a passage of world power, handed over with so little acrimony, as economic strength and changing situations and relationships with other nations, especially the Commonwealth, forced the transfer.

For some reason these things go in waves. In the last year of the recent Labour Government it seemed that derision of the Special Relationship was obligatory, almost a litany. Rachel Sylvester in The Times argued that since fewer than 5% of Americans knew who Prime Minister Brown was, “my two countries have fallen out of love.” A television clip showed Obama giving Labour’s Foreign Secretary David Miliband a big hello while simultaneously “snubbing” Brown, and the President’s replacing a bust of Prime Minister Churchill in the Oval Office with one of President Lincoln. Whenever the U.S. was in the news, British media seemed to feel the need to report that the “special relationship” was dead.

It really doesn’t matter much in my view if John Doe in America or Joe Bloggs in Britain have heard of Gordon Brown or not. The strength of the Special Relationship is not measured by the views of a hard-hat from Dayton or a taxi driver in Bradford. The relationship depends on solid bonds in four key areas: diplomatic, defence/intelligence, nuclear and business. These are all in very good shape now, and for the foreseeable future, no matter the number of “inside the beltway/chattering class” stories.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock said as much on Newsnight when Director of Ditchley: “Most current and former British ambassadors, whether they’ve served in America or not, will tell you the same, and that while recognising that Britain is the junior partner, they’d a lot rather Britain to be in alliance with the USA than not.”

There is no question either that Britain’s top military commanders, Navy, Army, or RAF, all endorse the partnership’s importance. They know their opposite numbers; many have served with American forces; and all of them hold the defence relationship in high regard. This is true not only on this side of the Atlantic; it’s also true in America.

There was no stronger advocate of this than the former chairman of the American Joint Chiefs of Staff, the late Admiral William Crowe, himself at one time ambassador to the Court of St James’s. Ambassador Crowe was living proof of the high regard with which both American diplomats and military at the highest level regard the contribution made by Britain—not just to partnering with the United States but also to the United Nations, the Security Council, and to the world.

British universities are respected by American educators, as are British scientists. Among the top 100 world universities the UK comes second only to the USA. We are not as rich, but in the clichéd phrase Britain punches above her weight in education and science, and in demonstrating British values shared with the American establishment. After all, Americans learned those values from its British colonists. So let us define the “Special Relationship”:

- What it is: The relationship between two nations.
- What it is not: Exclusive.
- What it should be: Plural.
- What it does not have to be: Comprehensive.
- What it must be: Flexible.
- What it is, as defined by the President: Essential.

There are many arguments for it.

**Constitutional and Legal:** The Rule of Law, the cusp between retributive justice and codified justice, was first expressed in England during the rule of King Æthelbert of Kent, c. 604, recorded in the Textus Roffensus; in the Coronation Oath of Henry I in 1100; and in Magna Carta of 1215, wherein the Rule of Law and Human Rights, if not universal, became, in 1297, the law of the land.

**Political:** Who here is not interested in the coming American election? Not a one—and this is approximately the fortieth audience in this country, from sixth formers and university undergraduates to Rotary clubs, where I’ve asked that question. I have yet to have a single admission of boredom with American Presidential contests. Why is the British-American All-Party Parliamentary Group the largest cross-party Commons and Lords committee of its type? Why are there people in this country, some four in ten, who express little interest in our British elections, yet say they are very interested in what’s happening in America?

**Financial:** The USA and the UK are each other’s largest investor country; America is Britain’s top export destination and our second-largest trading partner.

**Linguistic:** When intrepid voyagers founded the New World’s first permanent English-speaking colony, in Jamestown, Virginia in 1607 (thirteen years before the Mayflower), there were about two million people who spoke English, almost all in the British Isles and in the Caribbean. Now over a billion speak our language, on the way to two billion by 2020—a thousandfold increase in 400 years.

**Cultural:** Each of our countries is the other’s biggest market for television and cinema production and distribution. There are more auction houses, more exchanges of theatre, opera, classical and rock concerts, even country and western, than any other two countries. And of course, our two countries >>
Special and Essential...

are the largest publishers of books, magazines and scholarly articles in English.

Historic: Partly because of cinema, television and books, our peoples take a keen interest in each others’ political, military, and cultural histories. I know one MP who knows more about the American Indian tribes than any American I know, and another person, a judge, who certainly knows much more about the American Civil War than I do.

Educational: The most sought-after educational exchanges, in terms of both students and faculty, are Britain to America and America to Britain.

Journalistic: The elites in the USA and UK are the largest readers of each other’s newspapers.

And now, time to quote Winston Churchill, like so many of his era a product of an Anglo-American relationship: “In the days to come the British and American peoples will for their own safety and for the good of all, walk together side by side in majesty, in justice, and in peace.”

Former U.S. Ambassador Robert Tuttle said to the Pilgrims in 2009, just before his departure:

President Obama’s first call to a European leader was to Gordon Brown, it went extremely well and it started off with Barack and Gordon, and the President talked about his interest in the continuing special relationship.

We have between 18,000 and 20,000 official visitors a year, counting federal, state and local officials. Some come with a transient point, some come to give speeches, some come to talk to the media. But most of them come and meet with their counterparts in your government. That is how important this relationship is. That is how deep and strong this relationship is, and it is going to continue.

William Hague, when Shadow Foreign Secretary, was more personal, more evocative:

We British politicians love American politics. My wife hates it when we are travelling through America when I say, “Do you know we are going through a county which voted 73% Republican at the last election, and we are about to cross the border into one that is quite marginal in the next election?” She thinks I have completely taken leave of my senses.

Let’s take a minute to review the past 100 or so years. President Theodore Roosevelt rather undiplomatically distinguished between “real” Americans and “hyphenated Americans” (Italian-Americans, Irish-Americans, and so on); Henry Cabot Lodge argued that Americans of British descent had contributed three times as much to American abilities as all the others combined. However chequered Anglo-American diplomatic relations had been in the 19th century, there was a strong feeling among Americans of English ancestry that the two nations shared not only a common language, but common ideals, and that there was a need to assert their Anglo-Saxon heritage.

These sentiments were repeated by many early in the last century at Pilgrims functions. On his return from Washington, at a dinner in his honour on 6 November 1913, British Ambassador James Bryce declared that the friendship of the two countries rested on a “community of language, of literature, of institutions, of traditions, of ideals, of all those memories of the past which are among the most precious possessions of the two nations.” This echoed Churchill’s reminder of shared “law, language, literature” in his famous address on Anglo-American unity at Harvard in 1943.

The first Pilgrims dinner in New York was held at the Waldorf Astoria on 4 February, 1903, the year following the founding of the British Pilgrims, to welcome Admiral Lord Charles Beresford, close friend of King Edward VII, and later a vice-president of the American Pilgrims. Soon after this dinner, King Edward VII and President Theodore Roosevelt gave permission for the Pilgrims to couple the King and the President in a single toast, and it became the custom, immediately after the toast, for the orchestra to play a few bars of “God Save the King” and the “Star-Spangled Banner,” now a custom sadly lost along with the orchestral accompaniment to white tie dinners. For many years the speech of the principal guest was reprinted in The Times, and when it came into being, broadcast live on the BBC.

The Special Relationship has never been without rough edges, as with the reluctance of both Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt to enter into European wars too soon, to the dismay of the beleaguered British. Certainly Churchill not only felt his maternal “special relationship” existed, but between the governments and peoples as well—as did Macmillan.

Rough edges included the tenure of the immediate prewar American Ambassador Joseph Kennedy, who did much to irritate his host country. But the affinity was clear when his son’s thousand-day Presidency strengthened the relationship and softened any lingering recall of the actions and words of his father. The relationship also reached a nadir in 1956 at the time of the Suez Crisis.

On the other side, continuing the tradition of
outspoken “diplomats” was Lord Halifax, who in 1941, when sent to represent Britain in America, described the thought of going to Washington as “odious,” and told Baldwin, “I have never liked Americans, except odd ones [sic]. In the mass, I have always found them dreadful.” Later he reported to the King that he found Americans “very much resemble a mass of nice children—a little crude, very warm-hearted and mainly governed by emotion.”

Dealing with the Roosevelt administration, he said, was like a “disorderly day’s rabbit shooting.”

Certainly Churchill did much to cement the special relationship, spending weeks at a time as Roosevelt’s guest in the White House during the war, and treating FDR’s envoys as “one of us.” During and after the war he attended meetings of the cabinet in Washington, and clearly wished the relationship to continue in peace. He instructed his chief scientific adviser as early as 1940 to tell the Americans “everything that Britain was doing in the scientific field,” and joint military operations were as seamless as could be—in intent if not always in practice, given the extraordinary personalities on both sides.

It was Churchill who commented, to Brooke, that there was only one thing worse than fighting with allies, and that was fighting without them. In 1932, in the deepening Depression, he had told Pilgrims: “I believe that there is one grand valiant conviction shared on both sides of the Atlantic. It is this: together, there is no problem we cannot solve.”

Churchill took over from Chamberlain in May 1940, and spoke again to the Pilgrims in early 1941:

It is no exaggeration to say that the future of the whole world and the hopes of a broadening civilization founded upon Christian ethics depend upon the relations between the British Empire or Commonwealth of Nations and the U.S.A. The identity of purpose and persistence of resolve prevailing throughout the English-speaking world will, more than any other single fact, determine the way of life which will be open to the generations, and perhaps to the centuries, which follow our own….Therefore we stand, all of us, upon the watch towers of history.….8

Sandra Kaiser, former minister-counsellor for Public Affairs at the American Embassy in London, last year spoke on this topic, saying the Special Relationship is “one of those evergreen topics that falls dormant, only to spring up again. Wherever you go back in our shared history, it seems, the Special Relationship has been declared dead and buried—only to resurface, very much alive and well.”

A final word from Churchill. As he was retiring as prime minister in 1955, his advice to his colleagues was twofold: “Man is Spirit”—and “Never be separated from the Americans.”

Good thoughts then, good thoughts now. But I would add my own advice to our friends in America: Never be separated from the British. In good times and bad, we’re your best friends in the world.

I say no more than Barack Obama did last year when he remarked to newly-elected Prime Minister David Cameron: “The United States has no closer friend and ally than the United Kingdom. I reiterate my deep and personal commitment to the Special Relationship between our two countries—a bond that has endured for generations and across party lines, and that is essential to the security and prosperity of our two countries, and the world.”

Endnotes

1. As quoted by Lord McNally, Minister of Justice, Lincoln Cathedral Magna Carta address, 10 June 2011.
2. It is generally thought that Churchill first described the Special Relationship in his Fulton, Missouri, speech in March 1946 when he spoke of “a special relationship between the British Commonwealth and Empire and the United States.” In fact it was used in November 1945, when Churchill, quoted in The New York Times, said: “We should not abandon our special relationship with the United States and Canada about the atomic bomb....” Both references to the relationship were plural.
Taking a Chance: Editing the Churchill-Roosevelt Correspondence

In a moment you'll know the rationale for the title of this piece, which I hope is enlightening, or at least amusing, on the trials of doing research in the pre-computer age. More importantly, I’d like you to consider two great men and the policies of their time, and how my interpretations and perspectives have or have not changed.

In the Beginning

It was Lloyd Gardner, my longtime friend and colleague at Rutgers, who told me, years later, that I took a huge chance in choosing to edit the Churchill-Roosevelt correspondence, rather than churning out a few monographs. During the twelve years it took me to find, catalog, copy and comment on all their exchanges, I wrote a book about the Morgenthau Plan, some articles about diplomatic history, a few book reviews, and a long review that was a little controversial. But none of those would have impressed deans or promotion committees, so I guess I did take a chance. It was just too fascinating to ignore.

There was no secret in 1972, when I began, that lots of Churchill-Roosevelt messages had never been released. Privileged court historians like William Langer and Herbert Feis had cited documents not released elsewhere, which they’d seen in State Department records, to which they had (in those despicable words) “special access.” But not until 1955 did we actually see a volume in the foreign relations series cite a WSC-FDR exchange found at the Roosevelt Library.

That was the key, because the archivists at the Roosevelt Library were ahead of the curve. They had been collecting Churchill-Roosevelt correspondence from an incomplete collection in FDR’s papers in the so-called Map Room files. (The White House Map Room imitated Churchill’s, which he always had on his travels, with maps of all the theaters of war. It was quite a show, and Roosevelt was impressed.)

This correspondence was clearly kept in the Map Room collection, but the collection was not known. Nobody referred to it, citations to the correspondence simply said “FDR Library,” and efforts were made to hide its existence, because, for political reasons, nobody wanted it to seem like the British were leading or had led FDR down a primrose path. Their correspondence was thus pushed aside. As everyone who works at the State Department Historical Office knows, once it is pushed aside, getting it un-pushed is a task.

Having talked to people at the Roosevelt Library, I knew the trove existed, but they told me they could not release or even discuss the contents. Well, I said, that would be a great project. I was there routinely for other things, so I’d always raise the subject. Finally, in 1972, they said the Map Room papers were coming out—actually they said the “Churchill-Roosevelt stuff” was coming out. I’ve not done research on whether there were negotiations among British and American archivists and security people, but the British papers were not released until August 1973. The delay was because the British documents had to be “organized,” which meant the Cabinet offices had to go in and clean up what they didn’t
want released. (Back then the British “pre-weeded,” rather than look at it after it was in the archive, which is why they took longer.)

The decision to print all the correspondence came about for two reasons. First, the more I dug into it, the more uncomfortable I became taking anything out. After all, these are letters between two great leaders: every one seemed to matter. Second, I learned that Harold Langley, Manfred Jonas and Francis Lowenheim were doing a “selected” version—a good solid book. So I determined to publish the lot. Princeton University Press went along, although book editor Bill Hively later said he’d taken an oath on his mother’s grave never to do a three-volume collection of documents again.

Old scholars like to mutter about where they worked. I did it in my bedroom. I lived in a three-bedroom ranch house with three kids, a wife and two dogs, so something had to give. What gave was a corner of the large bedroom, where I did 90% of the typing. Truly, it started with a mechanical typewriter, though I later went to an electric. I used no carbon paper: “lose it and you lost it.” I tried to photocopy things as I went along. I still have some of the old notes. I can’t believe now that I did it that way, but to do with a large sum of money, because I’m disappointed that no publisher or sponsor has been willing to pay for digitizing the correspondence. It’s copyright-free: all public documents, and Princeton has no problem authorizing an e-book.

I’m rather proud of the collection. I found only two errors of substance in the printed documents. One was an FDR message, the other a Churchill message. Each was an error on my part. (Although I could photocopy some of it well enough for typesetters, I had to type out most of it.)

In both cases these errors involved the words “no” and “not,” the most powerful negatives in the English language. If I had put in “no” or “not,” it would have changed the meaning of everything. Remarkably, only two people have found these errors: David Reynolds, while writing his In Command of History; and Diane Clemens, the Yalta historian. In each case, the missing negative utterly changed the meaning of what was said. Yet not a single book or review caught it. Take it for what it’s worth, an interesting thought about how careful we are, or how uncareful we aren’t. (The negative is intended.)

The sources for the collection, which are routinely consulted, are the President’s files at the Roosevelt Library. They’re very complete, partly because he didn’t trust State Department security, and for good reason. You may recall the story of Tyler Kent, a code clerk in London who secreted away Churchill-Roosevelt correspondence and many other documents, hoping to blow the whistle on FDR colluding with the British. Roosevelt learned about it in 1940, and it scared him. FDR was quite happy if the State Department was last to learn what he was saying to Churchill. He had little confidence in them or their security. One Foreign Service officer, retiring during the war, actually read his retirement speech in the Gray Code—and everyone in the audience knew what he was saying. Think about that.

The other source was the British Public Records Office, now at Kew and renamed the National Archives, containing the wonderful Premier 3 and Premier 4 files, which fill in a lot of blanks.

I found twenty exchanges that were only in British files, mostly early in the war, because in February 1942, Churchill and Roosevelt began numbering their messages. At Churchill’s suggestion, he started at 25; FDR started with 101. I did choose to print a lot of drafts which were not sent or greatly altered, causing some people to scold, “You didn’t print the draft I needed to see.” If I’d printed all the drafts it would have been a five-volume collection and my editor would have had a coronary.

What Was Left Out

Everyone asks what’s missing from the collection. It’s really all there, save a few early messages that were added as an addendum to the original edition. I thought that when Ultra and all the various intelligence materials were accessed by scholars, there were bound to be some more messages, and I’ve kept a pretty close watch on that area, but I haven’t found anything. There are some tantalizing suggestions in the correspondence itself, that they would send classified attachments—really secret documents—but nothing has cropped up. I know some historian would like to needle me and say, “You missed this one,” but I haven’t found it.

What about telephone conversations? Alas they are gone, because no one kept a record of them. From the start of communications in 1939 they talked on the telephone until security people reminded them this wasn’t a very smart idea. We know the Germans were listening in—not much of substance there either. But then the Anglo-Americans did get a system called SIGSALY, precursor of digital encryption. (See Christopher Sterling, “SIGSALY: Beginning of the Digital Revolution,” Finest Hour 149: 31.)

There are fascinating stories about how SIGSALY was put together. Its prototypes were nicknamed “Green Hornets” (after the popular American radio melodrama), for the crackling sound heard by >>
anyone attempting to listen in. Churchill was a little upset because someone overheard Roosevelt say that Churchill on SIGSALY sounded like Donald Duck, so he found reasons not to use it. Of course they did use it, although Truman used it more than Roosevelt. But again, few of these conversations were recorded. Occasionally, someone took a note, usually second-hand. Stenographers were forbidden to listen in, and security people would sometimes scold Churchill and FDR for raising sensitive matters in their talks.

Whatever the chance of missing messages, I’m convinced that there is nothing of substance left out—no dramatic change that would affect the historical assessment of Roosevelt’s or Churchill’s policies: what they were thinking about.

**Fifteen Minutes of Fame**

If you write a book and have a choice on when it hits the streets, consider carefully the dog days of July. It’s a slow news month, and on 11 July 1984 when the Correspondence was at last published, Edwin McDowell’s review appeared on the front page of The New York Times: “Roosevelt/Churchill Letters Depict Tensions.” Wow, what a revelation!

Shortly thereafter, a New Yorker cartoon portrayed the classic Wall Street executive, round head and slightly overweight, lecturing a pouting associate: “Oh, for God’s sake, Banwell. If Roosevelt could occasionally get testy with Churchill, I can occasionally get testy with you.” I bought the original and hung it over my desk.

Of course historians have long known that the Grand Alliance had testy moments, but conventional wisdom was that the Churchill-Roosevelt relationship was smooth and comfortable. It’s an impression created in part by Churchill’s insistence in a letter to then-President Eisenhower that he had taken great pains to ensure that his war memoirs, particularly the final volume, “contained nothing to impair the sympathy and understanding which exists between our two countries”—a preemptive strike on history, I call it. Churchill wrote with the Special Relationship in mind: no wonder the public was surprised to learn of tensions historians already knew about.

So it was that in July 1984, courtesy of Winston Spencer Churchill and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, I had my Andy Warhol fifteen minutes of fame. It was nice, but you have to plan ahead: by October or November, to Princeton’s delight and my utter surprise, they had sold out the first printing: about 1500 sets. Thus I lost a whopping Christmas sale.

For some it was the perfect gift: “I am buying this for my husband for Christmas,” a woman told me at a book-signing, “because of that damn war. He talks about it all the time; it was the most exciting period of his life.” And they ran out of sets!

I couldn’t believe it. Bookstores were calling me, saying, “We need it. Talk to the printer!” Again I was the victim of 1980s technology: lining up a press in time. They tried to give advance purchasers a proof-of-purchase, but no wife, trying to buy a present for her banker husband, is going to take a certificate. I had my minutes of fame, but not fortune.

**What We Still Need to Know**

Churchill-Roosevelt exchanges do not stand alone. High politics is always supported by a vast structure of higher politics and bureaucratic politics (not sure if that is high or low) which shape, deflect, misunderstand, and even ignore the great leaders themselves. In fact, it’s kind of funny how often they are ignored.

So the Churchill-Roosevelt correspondence had to have, I thought, some kind of a running gloss. That’s why I went with head notes. Of course this is the most transient part of the collection, because it’s based on scholarship then available to me. I finished the task in 1983, but I do think it stands up pretty well.

There is one huge gap in the Churchill-Roosevelt correspondence: the wartime conferences. Churchill and Roosevelt met together eleven to thirteen times, depending on how you count. I always say thirteen, because I want to include the fascinating meeting at Great Bitter Lake at the end of the Yalta Conference. I finally decided to write an essay on each of the conferences, focusing not on all that was discussed, but on how those conferences moved along what was happening in the correspondence. I tried my best to do that. How successful I was is your judgment, not mine.

There are other gaps. I could look at how the British viewed the Americans and the Russians. As I’ve said too many times before, Stalin really was the ghost in the attic when it came to the Churchill-Roosevelt relationship. I could look at how the Americans viewed Stalin, Churchill and their messages. But I often complain that we have too little information, even today, about how Stalin assessed
the Churchill-Roosevelt messages and initiatives, what he thought they implied. Certainly he didn’t always get them right.

Oleg Rzheshesvsky published a wonderful book, *War and Diplomacy: The Making of the Grand Alliance* (Oxford: Taylor & Breach, 1996), which indicated that there was more in the Soviet archives than I’d been told during a Soviet/British/American joint project, where I’d represented the American side. For ten years, Soviet scholars had insisted Stalin didn’t take notes. He didn’t write memos. I think they said that simply because they didn’t see any.

*War and Diplomacy* was masterful in dealing with early debates about the second front. The most fascinating exchange was Roosevelt’s famous statement to Molotov that the Americans “expect” a second front in the autumn of 1942. A lot of people have made a fuss about that, saying it was a promise. Thanks to Rzheshesvsky’s book, we know there was no promise. Molotov wrote Stalin: “Every time Roosevelt talks about the second front, he hedges, and he hems, and he haws, and he uses different, vague words to describe it.” If anybody was fooled, it wasn’t Stalin.

Good Russian historians are still working on the Soviet side of the correspondence. Vladimir Pechatnov is preparing a complete new edition of Stalin’s correspondence with Churchill and FDR. To date, he has found nothing new, nor did he expect to. The original Soviet publication from 1958 is complete. There are differences in words, but you have to remember, a document often has had three translations before publication. Translators tell me it takes about five Russian words to say the same thing as three English words. That accounts for everything I could find in differences between the Russian and American versions. Pechatnov claims that he has seen memoranda—not just Stalin drawing a wolf on a sheet of paper, as we all know he liked to do. That is promising, but the promise has yet to be fulfilled.

The other big gap in my volumes, besides the conferences and Russian background, is that I’m not sure we yet know how Stalin interpreted everything Churchill and Roosevelt were doing. We can extrapolate from his actions, but that’s not fully reliable. Similarly, we have little evidence about how the Chinese assessed U.S. and British actions and policies, or in my case, Churchill’s and Roosevelt’s policies. Early Chinese scholars of the war had no access to Chinese documentation. What we have now is even more difficult to access, because there are two Chinas with two separate archives. We do know scholars are working their way through that, but their focus is really on that iceberg—the Cold War—that keeps trying to submerge World War II.

Was World War II really global? Churchill saw the Pacific as a secondary theater, and to be honest, it’s not the subject of much Anglo-American high policy, because it was a U.S. theater. While Roosevelt didn’t agree with Admiral King to keep the British out, he certainly did not consult Churchill on decisions. All these are gaps I am hoping to see filled.

**The Key Element: Leadership**

Where am I in my assessment of Churchill, Roosevelt and their vast correspondence? In truth, I am not very far from where I was in 1984. Maybe I’ve unconsciously contradicted myself in those pages, or in my related books like *Forged in War*. Some new details, maybe, but I don’t think I have made major reversals. Part of it may be that I don’t have a theory. I wrote once that to adopt a theory is to adopt a faith, and I guess I remain without faith. I’ve spent a career writing about high policy and leaders, and I remain convinced that Oscar Wilde and E.H. Carr framed the historiographical dilemma of great persons vs. great forces, though I think that Hegel was smarter. Wilde said: “It’s personalities, not principles, that move the age.” Carr said: “Simply numbers count.” But Hegel summed it up: “The great figure of the age actualizes the age.” That’s pretty good.

Churchill and Roosevelt are world-shaping figures who acted within the parameters of politics, culture, and history that existed. But there is an element in their story that comes out clearly in their correspondence: leadership. We all think we know how to write a brief definition of leadership. But try it and I guarantee you’ll throw away a whole pad of paper. It’s elusive. It’s like the Supreme Court decision about obscenity: “We don’t know what it is, but we know what it is when we see it.”

You see leadership in what Churchill and Roosevelt did—in their ability to motivate. As I’ve written before, can you imagine Cordell Hull evoking spontaneous cheers among U.S. soldiers in North Africa, as FDR did when he appeared there in 1942? Can you picture Lord Halifax by sheer rhetoric, making a victory out of the Dunkirk disaster? Or as Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. told the 1995 International Churchill conference: “Would Neville Chamberlain or Lord Halifax have rallied Britain in 1940? Would John Garner have produced the New Deal and the Four Freedoms?...Individuals do make a difference in history.”

Really, what Churchill and Roosevelt did was an amazing performance. And they did it time and time again. It was more than just rhetoric. People always equate rhetoric with leadership. No, that is how they delivered leadership. They were also leading effectively in what they did. >>
Churchill-Roosevelt Correspondence...

My impression in 1984, that the Grand Alliance was a little bit less grand than convention would have it, hasn’t changed, but I’ve softened it a tad. Bill Emerson, director of the Roosevelt Library back then, said that the final volume, subtitled Alliance Declining, should have been entitled, Alliance Triumphant. This tells you a lot about his generation and mine.

In spite of the defenses I have made of the Anglo-American Special Relationship—because I do think it still exists today—there was a lot of tension between the two great allies, more familiar now than in 1984: Roosevelt wanted economic and geopolitical advantage, but assumed the British were part of the Grand Alliance. Churchill called himself FDR’s “loyal lieutenant.” Some might find that a bit smarmy, but in reality he knew that Britain was not on a geopolitical par with America. Like any Englishman, he was sure he was smarter; but FDR assumed that the Special Relationship really worked. He honestly felt—and you see this in the correspondence—that he didn’t really have to schmooze Churchill to keep him happy.

It was Stalin he had to schmooze, because Stalin was the one they weren’t sure they could get into the family. Churchill and Roosevelt tried throughout the war to convince Stalin that he could trust them. Stalin honestly, I think, wanted the same result. But there were problems with what each could live with and feel comfortable with. That is for another lecture, because it is a long, hard story.

I am adamant that the Second World War was not the beginning of the Cold War. Something that I hinted at in the correspondence head notes, but have since pounced and tried to convince people of, is that this is the wrong way to look at World War II.

Churchill presented himself in his war memoirs as a prescient Cold Warrior. In reality he was ambivalent about how to deal with the Soviet Union. A delightful evidence of this emerges in his personal letters and private remarks: Often, when he talks about the “Bolsheviks,” he is talking about ideological Communism, of which he was an adamante foe; but if he talks about the “Russians,” he is referring to his allies—and mostly he talks about “Russians,” until after the Yalta conference.

Up through the Yalta talks, Churchill believed that there would be a great power condominium after the war. Who the great powers were, Churchill and Roosevelt didn’t always agree. Churchill muttered about France; Roosevelt muttered about China, primarily because he didn’t know what else to do. He certainly didn’t want the Russians in China—or the British, or for that matter the Americans. I think I have spent most of my career elaborating on those themes and trying to fill in the blanks; fill in the story from the outline you get in the Churchill-Roosevelt correspondence.

Many of the important events in the war were outside the sphere of Roosevelt’s and Churchill’s personal interest. I don’t mean their nations’—the United States had a global attitude, Britain a global empire—but in terms of their personal interest, where their leadership was required, many happenings were out of their reach, particularly domestic events in countries caught up in, or even neutral in, the war. I believe however that their correspondence provides a useful template for anyone studying the politics of the war, particularly the long-lasting political structure that they and Stalin established.

That template is still useful in studying today’s international structure, though it is changing, what with non-governmental organizations and groupings like the EU. Perhaps most relevant is Roosevelt’s concept of the “four policemen,” his ongoing pitch as the way to preserve the peace. Stalin first bought into it and then backed out. And Churchill bought into it, although he wanted more of a Euro-centric approach. I think that is a tremendously important point to make, and have worked twenty-five years to lay it out. You can’t understand everything through the prism of the Churchill-Roosevelt correspondence—but I think you will understand even less if you disregard it. It is a starting point for any study of World War II.

De Gaulle and the “Anglo-Saxons,” from page 53...

of his memoirs, was to prevent France passing from “the servitude imposed by the enemy to a subordinate role in relation to the Allies.” He did not go so far as to say “a subordinate role imposed by the Anglo-Saxon Allies”—but this is probably what he thought.

All this very largely explains de Gaulle’s later obsession with “national independence” in military and diplomatic affairs, his acceleration of the French nuclear programme, his mistrust of NATO and his two rejections of the British applications to join the Common Market—which he saw as totally incompatible with Churchill’s unambiguous vow of solidarity with America on 4 June 1944.

There is no doubt that de Gaulle always envied the British for having a privileged status in Washington. But at the same time, he was never prepared to pay the price Britain was paying in this type of Special Relationship.
THE CHURCHILL CENTRE AUSTRALIA
Alfred James, President
Tel. (2) 9489-1158
Email abmjames1@optusnet.com.au

INTL. CHURCHILL SOCIETY PORTUGAL
João Carlos Espada, President
Tel. (0351) 217214129
Email jespada@iep.lisboa.ucp.pt

THE CHURCHILL CENTRE UNITED KINGDOM
Allen Packwood, Executive Director
Tel. (01223) 336175
Email allen.packwood@chu.cam.ac.uk

FL-SOUTH: Churchill Society of South Florida
Rodolfo Milani • Tel. (305) 668-4419
Email churchillsocietyofsouthflorida@gmail.com

GA: Winston Churchill Society of Georgia
www.georgiachurchill.org
Joseph Wilson • Tel. (404) 966-1408
Email joewilson88@hotmail.com

IL: Churchill Centre Chicagoland
Phil & Susan Larson • Tel. (708) 352-6825
Email parker-fox@msn.com

LA: Churchill Society of New Orleans
J. Gregg Collins • Tel. (504) 798-3484
Email jggreggcollins@msn.com

MI: Winston Churchill Society of Michigan
Richard Marsh • Tel. (734) 913-0848
Email rcmarsha2@aol.com

NE: Churchill Round Table of Nebraska
John Meeks • Tel. (402) 968-2773
Email jmeeks@wrldhstry.com

NEW ENGLAND: New England Churchillians
Joseph L. Hern • Tel. (617) 773-1907
Email jlhern@rcn.com

NJ: New Jersey Churchillians
Daniel Milligan • Tel. (973) 978-3268
Email danielmilligan@gmail.com

NY: New York Churchillians
Gregg Berman • Tel. (212) 318-3388
Email gberman@fulbright.com

NC: Churchill Society of North Carolina
www.churchillsocietyofnorthcarolina.org
Craig Horn • Tel. (704) 844-9960
Email crahorn@carolina.rr.com

ND: Churchill Centre South
Don Jakeway • Tel. (210) 333-2085
Email churchillstx@gmail.com

OH: Churchill Centre Northern Ohio
Michael McMenamin • Tel. (216) 781-1212
Email michaelmcmenamin1@hotmail.com

OR: Churchill Society of Portland
William D. Schaub • Tel. (503) 548-2509
Email schaubw@aol.com

PA: Churchill Society of Philadelphia
Earl M. Baker • Tel. (215) 647-6973
Email earlmbaker@ix.net

TX-DAWLS: Emery Reeves Churchillians
Jeff Weesner • Tel. (940) 321-0757
Email jeffweesner@centurytel.net

TX-HOUSTON: Churchill Centre Houston
Chris Schaeper • Tel. (713) 660-6898
Email chrisschaeper@sbcglobal.net

TX-SAN ANTONIO: Churchill Centre South Texas
www.thechurchillcentresouthtexas.com
Don Jakeway • Tel. (210) 333-2085
Email churchillsx@gmail.com

WA: Churchill Society Seattle
www.churchillsocietyseattle.blogspot.com
Simon Mould • Tel. (425) 286-7364
Email simon@cccirkland.org
If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don’t deal in lies,
Or being hated, don’t give way to hating,
And yet don’t look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you’ve spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build ‘em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: ‘Hold on!’

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds’ worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that’s in it,
And—which is more—you’ll be a Man, my son!