

***Was Winston Churchill really "strongly in favor of using poisoned gas against uncivilized tribes?"***

On April 27, 2004, *Finest Hour* Senior Editor Paul Courtenay advised us of a rather vicious piece in the latest *Spectator* (April 24, 2004), headed "CHURCHILL FOR DUMMIES - Winston S. Churchill is the hero of George W. Bush and the Neocons". Says Michael Lind, the author, they know very little about the great wartime leader - if they did, they'd be horrified.

Michael Lind is the Whitehead Senior Fellow at the New America Foundation in Washington DC, and author of "Made in Texas: George W. Bush and the Southern Takeover of American Politics".

One rather snide remark is: ".....an essay by one Larry Arn, a frequent contributor [to 'Weekly Standard'] who is an academic adviser to something called the International Churchill Society."

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*Finest Hour* immediately penned the following Letter To the Editor of THE SPECTATOR:

Michael Lind's "Churchill for Dummies" (24 April) contains much that is trite and much that is true, as Arthur Balfour once said of a speech by Churchill: "The problem is that what's true is trite, and what's not trite is not true."

1) There is no doubt that American "neocons" who worship Churchill would praise him less if they knew more about him. (Had he a vote, e.g., he would have voted for the Democrat in the last eleven U.S. Presidential elections of his lifetime!) But this is hardly news to anyone who has put a modicum of study into the Churchill persona.

2) "Something called the International Churchill Society" changed its name to "The Churchill Centre" nine years ago, better to reflect its mission: which is not to worship at the shrine, but to look at Churchill "in the round," as Professor John Ramsden of Queen Mary College put it, "including listening to some pretty tough papers on the subject." Our academic advisers range from Larry Arn (not "Arn") on the Right to Warren Kimball on the Left. They regularly tangle at our conferences.

3) Mr. Lind really strains credulity when he insists on using out of context quotes. What Churchill published about Hitler as "indomitable champion" in *Great Contemporaries* was accompanied by this: "We cannot tell whether Hitler will be the man who will once again let loose upon the world another war in which civilization will irretrievably succumb, or whether he will down in history as the man who restored honour and peace of mind to the Great Germanic nation." (And as *Great Contemporaries* but not Mr. Lind notes, that was written in 1935, not 1937.)

4) Another truncated Churchill quotation--the one about poison gas--has so long been the preserve of the Raving Loony Lobby that one is surprised to find Mr. Lind using it. The COMPLETE memorandum reads:

"I do not understand this squeamishness about the use of gas. We have definitely adopted the position at the Peace Conference of arguing in favour of the retention of gas as a permanent method of warfare. It is sheer affectation to lacerate a man with the poisonous fragment of a bursting shell and to boggle at making his eyes water by means of lachrymatory gas.

"I am strongly in favour of using poisoned gas against uncivilized tribes. The moral effect should be so good that the loss of life should be reduced to a minimum. It is not necessary to use only the most deadly gasses: gasses can be used which cause great inconvenience and would spread a lively terror and yet would leave no serious permanent effects on most of those affected."

No doubt Mr. Lind never bothered to look up the original--and to realize that what Churchill recommended here was tear gas. (Churchill Papers 16/16, 12 May 1919). But before he embarrasses himself again, he should spend a little time on <http://www.winstonchurchill.org>--a website he will profit by.