F. E. Smith,  
Lord Birkenhead

We met and talked on innumerable occasions; never did I separate from him without having learnt something, and enjoyed myself besides. He was always great fun; but more than that he had a massive common sense and a sagacious comprehension which made his counsel invaluable, whether in public broil or private embarrassment....

Some men when they die after busy, toilsome, successful lives leave a great stock of scrip and securities, of acres or factories or the goodwill of large undertakings. F.E. banked his treasure in the hearts of his friends, and they will cherish his memory till their time is come.

—WSC, Great Contemporaries, 1937
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See inside back cover.

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signature
Winston Churchill’s closest friend, F.E. Smith, Lord Birkenhead, was not from the aristocratic circles in which WSC is often imagined to have dwelt. He arose from a middle-class family to achieve distinction through his own hard toil. “It must surely be an inspiration to youth to learn in the career of the first Earl of Birkenhead,” wrote Churchill, “that there is no bar of class, privilege or riches in our island to prevent the full fruition of outstanding capacity.” Illustration from Spy magazine, circa 1912.

David Freeman takes up the crucial friendship between Churchill and Birkenhead on page 28.

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13 BOOKS, ARTS & CURiosITIES
Reviews move to the front of the book as Finest Hour writers David Freeman, Andrew Roberts and Warren Kimball offer fact upon fact to refute fiction...
Christopher Sterling looks at the latest “Churchill and...” volume... The old Coventry bombing myth is back; Michael Richards finds the same old arguments...
Marcus Frost is struck by the tragedies in Europe after V-E day in David Stafford’s Endgame 1945... We cast back to 1985 for a re-review of Brian Garfield’s gripping WW2 thriller.
As a Belgian who was in France and Belgium in May and June 1940, I was deeply interested in Richard Langworth’s “Feeding the Crocodile: Was Leopold Guilty?” (pages 42-46). He fully and convincingly shows that Leopold was justified in concluding that further Belgian Army resistance was impossible, and that he had given timely warning to the British and French Allies of its inevitability.

I believe Churchill misspoke in his first reference to the King’s capitulation because at that time (mid-May 1940), he was preoccupied in making common cause with the French, whose will to fight was waning. The first public announcement of King Leopold’s capitulation was made in a speech by Paul Reynaud, French Prime Minister on 28 May, when he attempted to blame the Belgians for the French military debacle. For Churchill to have publicly distanced himself from Reynaud would have been injurious to what remained of the Allied war effort.

Another aspect of the King’s action on that day has remained a festering debate for Belgians ever since, albeit of relatively little concern to Finest Hour: Leopold’s decision, against the advice of his government, to become a “prisoner” of the Germans, in effect abandoning the fight against the invader. His decision not to fulfill his constitutional responsibility as Head of State, to follow the advice of his government to continue the war, was wrong in the opinion of many Belgians. On that charge I believe the verdict is “guilty.”

FINEST HOUR 139 / 4

FRANCIS DE MARNEFFE, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

In the summer of 1940, ninety percent of the Belgian people were in favour of the King. The plebiscite of 12 March 1950 showed the split that had developed. I believe Hitler’s decision to incarcerate the Walloon troops for five years, and the King’s subsequent marriage to a Flemish commoner, rather than his refusal to follow his government to London, turned Belgians against him.

As former soldiers we understand the King’s loyalty to his troops. He believed his pledge of 24 May, to remain no matter what happened, superseded his obligation to follow his ministers. The battle of the Lys, on 24-27 May, stunned the Germans, who could not believe how much fight was left in the Belgians. According to Liddell Hart, were it not for the stubborn resistance at Lys, the Dunkirk evacuation would not have been possible: “If King Leopold III had left Belgium on May 25th, as his ministers and Churchill had urged him to do, the Belgian army would have surrendered immediately, instead of fighting on until early morning of May 28th. If so, the British would have had very little chance of escaping encirclement, so it could very reasonably be claimed that they were saved by King Leopold III, who was then violently abused by Britain and France.”

For us, we honor our troops and our King for their valor and their courage. We thank Dr. de Marneffe and respect his opinion.

DANIEL WYBO, TORONTO, ONT.
introduced him into the world of the Belgian Royal family.
LADY YOUNG, ANDOVER, HANTS.

INTELLIGENCE CORPS
With the greatest respect, Danny Mander is mistaken in believing the Field Security Police (page 20) to be “our own secret branch of the Military Police.” It was precisely to avoid confusion regarding its function that the name was changed in 1940 to the Field Security Service—a branch of the Intelligence Corps. Having had the privilege of serving in Field Security, however, I would certainly accept that his description of us as “nondescript” is pretty accurate.
PETER TRAY, LONDON

POOR NEVILLE
My take on Munich is that Chamberlain gets blamed for the outcome of a crisis for which there may not have been any solution. So it was gratifying to find in the latest FH two analogous situations: Singapore and Leopold III. Once is an anecdote; but three times suggest a principle: Some problems have no answers. We have a word for it—“tragic.” The other principle is, we all need a scapegoat. Poor Neville.
PROF. MANFRED WEIDHORN
YESHIVA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK

WINSTON & JACK
What a defensive and dull review of Celia and John Lee’s five years of research and writing from a trove of private family letters and documents never before read outside the immediate family (pages 47-48). Ted Hutchinson might not like the facts, but these authors expose them with sympathetic delicacy and exquisite tact. At the same time, they assassinate a number of untruths that to this day line the pockets of more mercenary authors. Even the Lees have not given Jack (and later his son Peregrine) enough credit for trying to keep the family financially solvent.
ELIZABETH C. SNELL, HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

BOWELS NOT TOWELS
Help me stop laughing about the slip of the finger (left index) that turned “Keep Your Bowels Open...” into “Keep your Towels Open...” (page 48). Can I be the first to notice that? Reviewing Stansky is a perfect example of what I have suggested to you often: the context within which Churchill operated is where Finest Hour can, I believe, contribute to knowledge: “…understanding Churchill’s leadership requires an understanding of the London Blitz, not the other way round.”
PROF. WARREN F. KIMBALL, JOHN ISLAND, S.C.

WFB, RIP
I wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed your tribute to William F. Buckley, Jr. (pages16-18). I have always admired him, although I have really never known much about him. When I first began to read Churchill, I was struck by the literary quality of WFB’s eulogies for friends and public figures. Like Lincoln, whom Buckley mentioned at our conference, Churchill was able to distill into a few words the essence and significance of a life or event. You seem to have that gift.
STEVE GOLDFIEN, SAN FRANCISCO

A quick but appreciative note about your reminiscence of William F. Buckley, Jr. It was nicely done. I also enjoyed your essay about Leopold III. I have run across this controversy during my work on Herbert Hoover. It was a subject that interested Hoover and his Belgian Relief entourage.
GEORGE H. NASH, JR., SOUTH HADLEY, MASS.

Dr. Nash is the distinguished biographer of President Hoover.

ERRATA, FH 138
Page 11. The photo shows the Ministry of Defence main building, which remains in business. It is the Old War Office building next door that is being dispensed with.
Page 20, column 2: for “branch of Military Police” read “branch of Intelligence Corps.” (See left.)
Page 43: Arrgh! The soldiers pictured are German, not Belgian! The photo was mislabeled. Thanks to Paul Courtenay and Francis de Marneffe, who writes: “The shape of the helmet, the insignia on the collar and the marking on the sleeve all confirm it. The Belgian helmet was the same shape as the French.”
Our apologies, to Belgian readers in particular.
Page 48. The most amusing gaffe in months is the title, which should read “Keep Your Bowels Open” not “Keep Your Towels Open,” though the latter has a kind of wry appeal. (See left.)
The Fine Art of the Selective Quote

In this issue we do something we’ve never done before. We move “Books, Arts & Curiosities” to the “front of the book.” This is not to give undue attention to Nicholson Baker’s and Pat Buchanan’s simultaneous attack-books, but to equip our readers with facts that support Churchill’s honor, judgment and good name—and to demonstrate how easily history may be bent.

A problem illustrated by Pat Buchanan’s *Churchill, Hitler, and the Unnecessary War* is the rampant use of selective quotes. No animus toward the author: “I like a man who grins when he fights,” as Churchill said. But selective quotations edited to distort the facts and to fit a predetermined mindset are out of bounds.

To establish Churchill’s “lust” for World War I, for example, Buchanan quotes him on 28 July 1914: “Everything tends towards catastrophe & collapse. I am interested, geared up and happy. Is it not horrible to be built like that?...” (28). But he omits the rest of that passage: “...The preparations have a hideous fascination for me. I pray to God to forgive me for such fearful moods of levity. Yet I w[oul]d do my best for peace, and nothing w[oul]d induce me wrongfully to strike the blow.” (*Winston S. Churchill*, Companion Volume II, Part 3, published 1969, 1989.)

Again on 10 January 1915, he has Churchill exclaiming: “My God! This, this is living History. Everything we are doing and saying is thrilling—it will be read by a thousand generations, think of that! Why I would not be out of this glorious delicious war for anything the world could give me (eyes glowing but with a slight anxiety lest the word ‘delicious’ should jar on me)” (66).

The latter is pure hearsay from the notoriously waspish Margot Asquith, but assume he said it. To suit his thesis Pat trims the rest of what Margot reported: “...I say don’t repeat that I said the word ‘delicious’—you know what I mean.....” (*Winston S. Churchill*, Companion Volume III, Part 1, published 1972, 400.)

Possessed of the words deleted from Margot’s idle chit-chat, one might ask what WSC meant by “you know what I mean”? Did he assume Margot knew he realized what barbarity war was—that he had been warning of the apocalyptic nature of a European war since attacking the Army Estimates in 1903?

I searched in vain amid Pat’s collection of lusty war quotes for contrary expressions—and there are many. Take Churchill’s 1909 remark after watching German Army maneuvers: “Much as war attracts me & fascinates my mind with its tremendous situations—I feel more deeply every year—& can measure the feeling here in the midst of arms—what vile & wicked folly & barbarism it all is” (*Winston S. Churchill*, Companion Volume II, Part 2, published 1969, 912). The author does include an early 1900s remark about the dangers of a European war, but only to imply that Churchill had changed his tune by 1914. Nowhere do we read exculpatory evidence, such as Churchill’s 1911 proposal for an Anglo-German “naval holiday” or, at the eleventh hour, of a peace conference attended by all the Heads of State of Europe.

Then there is Hitler, on whom Pat has been industrious. Under his photo we read: “If our country were defeated, I hope we should find a champion as indomitable to restore our courage and lead us back to our place among the nations.” —Churchill on Hitler, 1937.” This sentence has often been culled out to be misunderstood. Here is the full passage (*Step by Step*, 1947 edition, 158). Draw your own conclusions:

To feel deep concern about the armed power of Germany is in no way derogatory to Germany. On the contrary, it is a tribute to the wonderful and terrible strength which Germany exerted in the Great War, when almost single-handed she fought nearly all the world and nearly beat them. Naturally, when a people who have shown such magnificent military qualities are arming night and day, its neighbours, who bear the scars of previous conflicts, must be anxious and ought to be vigilant. One may dislike Hitler’s system and yet admire his patriotic achievement. If our country were defeated I hope we should find a champion as indomitable to restore our courage and lead us back to our place among the nations. I have on more than one occasion made my appeal in public that the Führer of Germany should now become the Hitler of peace.

All of which shows yet again that you can use Churchill’s words, vacuumed like a gigantic Hoover and offered without ellipses by the faithful Martin Gilbert, to prove anything. You only have to preselect and edit the right ones. —RML
Did he want a deal with Stalin?

Q While it is beyond question that Churchill’s leadership of embattled Britain during 1940-41 prevented the war from being lost, don’t you think that some sort of arrangement with the Soviet Union before August 1939 could have checked Hitler’s designs and saved mankind much misery? True, he was not at the head of affairs then, but did he try to influence his Party to move in that direction? Or was his hatred of communism too strong for him to see the opportunity? Could you kindly let me know if you have published anything on this subject?

A Good question. Churchill did favor a Soviet alliance, or at least an understanding, in the period you mention—and for several years leading to it. He was convinced that Stalin’s reach was confined to Soviet borders, while Hitler’s ambitions were at least pan-European. (See following articles.) The problem was that Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, who by then was pretty much his own foreign secretary, was not convinced, and Churchill had less influence with Chamberlain at this time than the Labour Party. The Prime Minister sent low-level diplomats to talk to Moscow, while the Germans sent their foreign minister, and the outcome was the Nazi-Soviet Pact of late August 1939. Stalin was convinced the British weren’t serious, and saw major advantages in a deal, however temporary, with Hitler. Churchill had no influence in this period.

It impossible to say what Churchill would done had he been in charge. Were he in charge in 1939 he might have applied personal diplomacy, as he did with Stalin, Roosevelt and de Gaulle in 1941-45. Had he been in charge in 1938, he might have gone to war with Hitler over the Czech Sudetenland—Russia or no Russia. All this makes for fascinating speculation, but we can draw no real conclusions.

For material on the subject see Winston S. Churchill, by Martin Gilbert, vol. 5 (London: Heinemann, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976), which is very thorough on the topic; check references to the Soviet Union, Maisky, Stalin, etc.

For instance, on 20 April 1936, Sir Martin writes:

[Chamberlain adviser Maurice] Hankey also told [Minister for the Coordination of Defence Sir Thomas] Inskip of a “fantastic plan” which Churchill had explained to him in detail for sending part of the British Fleet to the Baltic “to ensure superiority over Germany in that sea. It would stay there permanently, based on a Russian port of which we should obtain the use under this plan...In view of the danger from Germany he has buried his violent anti-Russian complex of former days and is apparently a bosom friend of [Soviet ambassador] M Maisky. Until quite recently he has been inclined to believe in the strength of Russia. He has, however, been seriously shaken in this...” (723-24)

See also Ivan Maisky, Memoirs of a Soviet Ambassador (London: Hutchinson, 1967; New York, Scribners 1968). Encouraged by a member of the government, Robert Vansittart, Churchill maintained a friendly relationship with the Soviet ambassador and through him Litvinov, the Soviet foreign minister (until the latter was replaced by a harder-line successor). Both Russian diplomats had relatively positive inclinations toward Britain, and distrusted Germany. There are numerous examples in Maisky’s book (and also in the Companion Volume Part 3 to Gilbert’s Volume V, The Coming of War 1936-39) attesting to Churchill’s wish for an Anglo-Soviet common front in the face of Hitler’s Third Reich.

Finally, use the “search” feature on our website and enter key words, such as Maisky, collective security, Russian alliance, Molotov-Ribbentrop, and so on. You will find links to many useful articles.

I am seeking a quote, I believe from Violet Bonham Carter, but can only remember a bit of it: “Churchill had no antenna.”


Bonham Carter is a “standard work”: an insightful insider’s account with many deft judgments on WSC’s life and character. From the American edition, 22-23 (English ed., 21-22):

The trouble with Winston Churchill was that no one ever knew what he was going to say—or do. The unpredictable is rarely popular. More often than not it is mistaken for the unreliable. The public like getting what they expect. They resent surprises and prefer being lulled to being startled.

I am not of course suggesting that in that first summer of our early friendship any of these reflections, forecasts or analyses crossed my mind. But I knew that politics depend above all else upon the power of persuading others to accept ideas. I was disturbed to find among so many people a blank and blind refusal to recognize Winston Churchill’s rare and dazzling quality. And I sometimes felt amazement and alarm at his own seeming unawareness of their reactions to himself. Though he had vision he appeared to lack antennae, to ignore the need to feel his way about other minds. I remembered, with some reassurance, the lines of Blake:

“Does the Eagle know what is in the pit
Or wilt thou go ask the Mole?”

The poetry is from William Blake (1757-1827): the first two lines from The Book of Thel, the first of Blake’s prophetic books (Chambers Encyclopedia of English Literature, vol. II, 718).
“THE FEW” UP FOR BID
LONDON, MAY 25TH—Pursuit of filthy lucre extends sadly to a typescript of Churchill’s famous speech paying homage to “The Few” (RAF fighter pilots) on 20 August 1940. According to Christie’s, the three-page typescript is “the only surviving draft of one of the great speeches of the 20th century,” and they estimate £100,000 to £150,000.” Provenance appears to be the estate of Sir John Colville.

Allen Packwood of the Churchill Archives Centre at Cambridge explains that Christie’s claim is inaccurate: “We hold the complete set of Churchill’s final annotated speaking notes for his speech of 20 August 1940 (our reference: CHAR 9/141A). These comprise the final version of the address in the characteristic blank verse format that his office called ‘psalm form’.” We also hold a file of draft annotated typescripts for the speech, which show it evolving (CHAR 9/173B). It is clear that “the few” pages (excuse the pun) offered for auction at Christie’s were part of an early typescript version for which we have the remaining pages, including the page with the immortal line about the Battle of Britain pilots. We also have later reworked versions, again with annotations, for the part of the speech that is being sold.

“The documents here in the Archives Centre formerly belonged to the Chartwell Trust, set up during Churchill’s lifetime to look after his literary assets, and were prominently stamped in the 1960s. The fact that these few pages are not stamped suggests that they passed out of Churchill’s custody prior to the creation of the Trust, and were probably given by Churchill to Colville (it was not rare for Churchill to do this).

“Sadly, the Archives Centre is not in a position to bid at this sort of level. However, we would gladly offer a secure home to these documents should the new owner decide that they ought to be reunited with the rest of the text.”

“THE FEW” TWO-PIECE
LONDON, MARCH 27TH—To celebrate the 90th Anniversary of the Royal Air Force on 1 April, a new RAF bikini, “part of the RAF Collection’s Spring range,” features “diamante roundels in the RAF colours” but little room for hanging medals. A spokeswoman for the RAF said: “The Collection will enable the next generation to own a piece of one of the United Kingdom’s most prestigious brands. The bikini top retails at £20, while the bottoms are £15.” For better fit, apparently. The RAF bikini is the second of its type: last year’s had pink and blue roundels.

The RAF adds: “By associating our brand marks, including the RAF logo, on high-end leisure products, we build up our image around the UK and globally...and, just as importantly, bring us to the attention of young people who are the next generation of RAF personnel.” Finest Hour thought this was a spoof, but it’s true. The ostensible reason for this foray by a world famous air force into leisure apparel is to support RAF museums. Sounds pretty flimsy to us (pun intended).

In the selfsame website where we find pictures of the RAF bikini—suitably enough, The Sun (http://xrl.us/dda6y)—we read that the RAF Jaguar fighter-bomber is to be scrapped six months early to save defence money; crews were given a week’s notice to wrap up all missions. The loss of the Jaguars, only recently recipients of a multi-million pound upgrade, means an aircraft shortfall for over a year. Tory defence spokesman Gerald Howarth said: “It’s a waste of money because of its recent upgrade, and appalling man-management for the crews.”

Look on the bright side, Gerald: they may not have Jaguars, but they have bikinis.

We kid you not. Meanwhile, the model below (Jaguar) is scrapped.

“THERE IS NOTHING IMPROPER IN BELLIGERENTS MEETING TO DISCUSS THEIR AFFAIRS EVEN WHILE ACTUAL BATTLES ARE GOING ON. ALL HISTORY ABUNDING IN PREDENTs. ALL THE TIME THAT NAPOLEON WAS FIGHTING HIS DESPERATE CAMPAIGNS IN FRANCE IN 1814 THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL, COMPOSED OF HIS REPRESENTATIVES AND THOSE OF THE ALLIES, WERE IN CONSTANT CONFERENCE AT CHÂTILLON-SUR-SEINE.”
—WSC, HOUSE OF COMMONS, 25 FEBRUARY 1954
“Let’s see,” writes a *Finest Hour* reader: “Combat over the trenches, the desert war, the Battle of Britain, the desperate struggle for Malta, the nighttime bombing of Nazi Germany, Korea, Suez, the Falklands, Desert Storm...this is how we commemorate ninety years of commitment, bravery and sacrifice. Perhaps they mean to celebrate what we were fighting for.”

You mustn’t say that, you know. It’s so...insensitive. Hate to be prudes but our reaction is Biblical: “How are the mighty fallen and the weapons of war perished!” —II Samuel 1:27

**LION’S ROAR INSTIGATOR**

**LONDON, JANUARY 13TH—** *Finest Hour* readers are familiar with Sir Winston’s 80th birthday remark about the British people: “Their will was resolute and remorseless, and as it proved, unconquerable....It was a nation and race dwelling all round the globe that had the lion heart. I had the luck to be called upon to give the roar.”

John Harvey CBE, who died today, was the man who prompted this famous Churchill *bon mot*. From 1955 to 1966 he was Conservative MP for Walthamstow East, sandwiched between Churchill’s constituency of Woodford and Clement Attlee’s of Walthamstow West. Before entering Parliament, Harvey was Churchill’s constituency chairman in Woodford. At a constituency party before the Parliamentary celebrations (from which Churchill’s words above are taken), Harvey said: “I know, sir, that you don’t like people to say that you won the war. So I will not suggest it. I suggest you gave us the will to win.” This elicited the first appearance of Churchill’s “lion heart” response.

**MESS OF CENTURIES**

**LONDON, FEBRUARY 1ST—** “Moral failings” in Britain’s past mean pupils should not be taught patriotism, the Institute of Education declared today. The left-leaning institute polled forty-seven teachers and 299 secondary school students, 90 percent of whom agreed. “Patriotism excludes non-British pupils,” said one teacher...”in my experience [it] tends to be a white preserve [and] so divides groups along racial lines.” Another added: “Left to my own devices I wouldn’t dream of covering it....To me it sort of reeks of the old British Empire.”

They remind us of what Churchill said when Labour Prime Minister Clement Attlee declared in 1951 that his government had had only six years to clean up “the mess of centuries.” Speaking in Woodford on 12 October 1951, WSC replied:

This is what the Prime Minister considers Britain and her Empire represented when in 1945 she emerged honoured and respected from one end of the world to the other by friend and foe alike after her most glorious victory for freedom. The mess of centuries—that was all we were. The remark is instructive because it reveals with painful clarity the Socialist point of view and sense of proportion. Nothing happened that was any good until they came into office. We may leave out the great struggles and achievements of the past—Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights, Parliamentary institutions, Constitutional Monarchy, the building of our Empire—all these were part of ‘the mess of centuries’...But at last a giant and a Titan appeared to clear up ‘the mess of centuries.’ Alas, he cries, he has had only six years to do it in.

A fortnight after Churchill’s speech, Clement Attlee was replaced by Winston Churchill. Would that a similar transformation will find the Institute of Education replaced by an Institute of Common Sense.

**WHY STUDY CHURCHILL?**

We are often asked: “Why do you think it is important to promote Churchill’s legacy among young people?” There are many reasons, both simple and complex, not least of which is that Churchill is an exemplar of a statesman, says Larry Arnn, President of Hillsdale College and longtime CC academic collaborator: “Understanding his uphill battles through life is fascinating to young people who must carefully reflect on their own lives, both successes and failures, in order to reach their goals.

“I teach a seminar every year on Churchill. Mostly the students are seniors. Mostly they are among our best. I spend about 30 percent of the time teaching them what politics is and what statesmanship is. We turn to Churchill specifically after that. Churchill is used as an example of a thing everyone needs to understand, if they are to call themselves liberally educated. At the undergraduate level, such things should be the bulk of what is taught, in my opinion. That means one is not studying Churchill as a specialty, but rather as an example of something of general importance.”

**CHASING CHURCHILL**

**PBS TELEVISION, JULY 21/28TH, AUGUST 4TH—** Fifty years after she cruised the Mediterranean with her grandfather, Winston Churchill, as guests of Aristotle Onassis on his yacht, Christina, Celia Sandys relived her experience on PBS in three segments at 10 pm eastern time. In a documentary based on her book, *Chasing Churchill*, she is back on *Christina* in the Mediterranean. She also traces his footsteps in South Africa, Morocco, Cuba, Egypt, France, and the United States, now on television for the first time. (If, as we expect, you read this after the fact, check for re-runs.)

The daughter of Diana Churchill and British Cabinet Minister Duncan Sandys, Celia was twenty-one when her grandfather died in 1965. They had become close, and she accompanied him often on the many trips that filled his later years. They cried together as they watched the news reports of the assassination of President Kennedy. She held his hand as he was brought back to England in an ambulance plane after a leg fracture in the south of France. She was at his bedside as his life ebbed away on 24 January 1965.
**AROUND & ABOUT**

Adam Kirsh, writing in the *New York Sun* of 11 June: “It is a delicious irony, but also a significant one, that *Churchill, Hitler, and the Unnecessary War*, Patrick J. Buchanan’s new contribution to the flourishing genre of World War II revisionism (see page 13), should appear in the same season as Nicholson Baker’s *Human Smoke* (see page 17). Never has there been such a clear demonstration of the way ideological extremes tend to converge. Messrs. Baker and Buchanan probably could not stand to be in the same room for five minutes. The former is to the left of most Democrats, the latter to the right of most Republicans...And both have zeroed in on *Winston Churchill* as the war’s true villain—an immoral, hypocritical, bloodthirsty braggart whose fame is a hoax on posterity.”

Christopher Hitchens, the iconoclast who never stands any nonsense from facts when it comes to Churchill and is always willing to raise a profitable ruckus (*FH* 114:14), has morphed into a Churchill defender (“Revisionists say that World War II was unnecessary. They’re wrong.” *Newsweek*, 14 June). This will last only until Chris’s next opportunity to stick pins in his Winston doll. His *Newsweek* piece is uncharacteristically flabby and he has some dates wrong, but every so often he strikes gold: “Winston Churchill may well have been on the wrong side about India, about the gold standard, about the rights of labor and many other things, and he may have had a lust for war, but we may also be grateful that there was one politician in the 1930s who found it intolerable even to breathe the same air, or share the same continent or planet, as the Nazis....Yet the more the record is scrutinized and re-examined, the more creditable it seems that at least two Western statesmen [WSC, FDR], for widely different reasons, regarded coexistence with Nazism as undesirable as well as impossible.” (See cartoon, page 16).


Terry Reardon reports a presumably tongue-in-cheek comment in the April 15th *Globe and Mail* department entitled “One Hundred Years Ago”: “Winston Churchill was appointed President of the Board of Trade in the newly formed cabinet of British Prime Minister Herbert Asquith. Wonder whatever became of him?” As the Italian said, “damfino”....
It is broadly known that by his next visit, on 29 October 1941, Churchill had obtained the Headmaster’s permission to substitute the word “sterner” for “darker.” “Do not let us speak of darker days,” he told the boys; “let us rather speak of sterner days. These are not dark days; these are great days—the greatest days our country has ever lived; and we must all thank God that we have been allowed, each of us according to our stations, to play a part in making these days memorable in the history of our race.”

What we had not realized until the above version came up recently was that Harrow itself rewrote the last four lines for the 1941 visit. By then, the Blitz with its theme of “grim and gay” had mainly ended, and it was likely thought better to express resolution for the long haul—so the last four lines were completely different.

Here for the record is the complete verse, as it has been sung at Harrow ever since:

Nor less we praise in sterner days
The leader of our nation,
And CHURCHILLES name shall win acclaim
From each new generation.

For you have the power in danger’s hour,
Our freedom to defend, Sir!
Though long the fight, we know the right
Will triumph in the end, Sir!

The punctuation throughout, including the capitalized and uncапitalized “Right,” is from Harrow School Songs (Henley-on-Thames: Gresham Books, 1993 edition).

FICTION OR FACT?

Beginning with the next issue of Finest Hour, “Action This Day” columnist Michael McEnamlin will offer a new department which will briefly review works of fiction, new and old, where Churchill appears as a fictional character. While records aren’t kept on this sort of thing, it is probably safe to say that Churchill appears as a fictional character as often if not more than any other historical figure. So for a novelist, “getting Churchill right” can be as important to preserving the accuracy of his memory as for a writer of non-fiction, often with a smaller audience. Next issue: mini-reviews of Dreamers of the Day by Mary Doria Russell, much of which takes place during the Cairo Conference of 1921; and Pearl Harbor, by Newt Gingrich and William Fortschen, which is set in the period 1934 to 1941. Churchill is a major supporting character in both novels.

GENERATIONAL CHAUVINISM 101

LONDON, APRIL 18TH—“Anybody repeating the bonkers mantra that Beijing 2008 will re-run the 1936 Nazi Olympics might reconsider some other racial views of that era, such as Winston Churchill’s considered opinion that ‘Chinks’ and ‘dirty baboos’ in the East needed a good thrashing with ‘the sjambok,’” announced The Times.

We checked our digital scans of Churchill’s books, articles, speeches and published papers and works about him. “Chinks” comes up twenty-one times, mostly in relation to chinks in walls, once in relation to the Chinese. “Baboos” has nine appearances, mostly in relation to “baboos” in the East needed a good thrashing with “the sjambok.”

Churchill’s adviser on intelligence matters, Major Desmond Morton, wrote that to Churchill “all Germans were Nazis, all Italians organ-grinders... en masse the Bedu is a dirty, cowardly cut-throat, with very primitive passions indeed and about as trustworthy as a King Cobra.” Furthermore, Negroes were “niggers” or “blackamoors,” Arabs were “worthless,” Chinese were “chinks” or “pigtails,” Indians were “baboos” (a contemptuous term for clerks), and South African black tribes were “Hottentots.” Not all Churchill’s racial characterizations were negative, however. He believed the Jews to be “the most formidable and the most remarkable race which has ever appeared in the world”

“Sjambok” (a rhino-hide whip commonly used on black miners in Southern Rhodesia during the early 1900s) comes up only three times, >>

During a weekend at Chequers, the Governor of Burma, Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, raised the possibility of self-government for some colonies but he found that Churchill would not listen. The Prime Minister's response was to say, "What those people need is the sjambok" and to order the Governor to leave Chequers immediately.

So what The Times did was stitch together, from secondary sources, "chinks," "baboons" and "sjambok," to manufacture what will no doubt soon be all over the internet as a direct Churchill quotation.

There was no doubt that Churchill was a product of his time who occasionally (though apparently not a lot) used racial epithets. What is remarkable is the modern media's belief that a century ago, Winston Churchill should have sounded like, well, Martin Luther King. They should consider what other Englishmen of his time were saying—Rudyard Kipling for example. Compared to him, our man sounded like Mahatma Gandhi.

The plaque was placed through the efforts of Roberta Whipple, liaison administrator for library and cultural of St. Pete Beach (sister city to Sandown, Isle of Wight). Noting there was no commemoration, Ms. Whipple contacted Councillor Heather Humby, then chairman of the Isle of Wight Council, got in touch with Councillor Geoff Banks at Cowes Town Council, and it was decided to put up a plaque in tribute. Cowes Town Council paid £500 towards the cost of the plaque and a donation came from the cultural affairs office at St, Pete Beach.

—MARTIN NEVILLE, ISLE OF WIGHT COUNTY PRESS

L. ARTHUR KITZ, R.I.P.

HALIFAX, N.S., FEBRUARY 4TH— Mike Campbell reports that the bronze Churchill statue by Oscar Nemon, 1.5 tons and standing seven feet high, has been beautifully refurbished, and sends us the photograph at right. Mike, along with Terry Reardon of ICS Canada, provided the following extract from the obituary of the man who made it possible, who died today:

“One of Arthur Kitz’s most famous hurrahs was his championing of the fundraising effort to erect a seven-foot-tall Oscar Nemon bronze statue of Winston Churchill in front of Halifax Public Library on Spring Garden Road. The idea was hatched when Mr. Kitz and Henry (Hal) Jackman sat on the same board in the 1970s. Mr. Jackman was keen to see statues of the British wartime leader erected in several Canadian cities and was prepared to prime the project with a personal donation. Mr. Kitz headed a committee that eventually raised more than $150,000. Mr. Jackman also funded the Oscar Nemon statue in Toronto City Hall Square, which is a copy of the statue in the House of Commons in Westminster.

—GLOBE AND MAIL

Leonard Kitz became the first Jewish mayor of Halifax in 1955; Mike Campbell’s mother was his personal secretary for many years. Kitz’s widow, Janet, is a Halifax historian.

ROSETTA COTTAGE

COWES, ISLE OF WIGHT, AUGUST 18TH, 2004— The first meeting between Churchill’s parents is commemorated on a slate plaque here. They met during Cowes Week in 1873; their marriage two months later is remembered in the plaque, made of Cornish slate embedded in the pavement opposite Rosetta Cottage, Queen’s Road, now owned by the National Trust. It reads:

Rosetta Cottage lies the other side of the road and here, in Cowes Week, 1873, Lord Randolph Churchill first met and proposed to Jenny Jerome, eldest daughter of American Leonard Jerome, then proprietor [sic; he was an investor but never a proprietor] of The New York Times. Their marriage bore them their first son Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill 30th November 1874.

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FINES HOU. 139 / 120
A Polemic, Not a History

DAVID FREEMAN

Although there is no indication in this book that Pat Buchanan is familiar with the work of the late Harry Elmer Barnes, he has nevertheless arrived at many of the same arguments that Barnes first pressed more than fifty years ago. His book is, then, the latest entry in the revisionist canon, recycling old arguments so familiar that The Churchill Centre long ago added a website section to refute them: “Leading Churchill Myths” (http://xrl.us/fk6by).

Pat Buchanan, who earlier wrote A Republic, Not an Empire, might have made this book part of a series by entitling it A Polemic, Not a History. He describes it as “a battle of the historians,” but he has done no archival research. Instead he has read the standard popular histories such as Barbara Tuchman’s and William Manchester’s, and the revisionist histories of A.J.P. Taylor, Correlli Barnett, John Charmley, et al. Conspicuous by omission is David Irving—presumably intentionally. From these purely secondary sources, Buchanan formulates his theses. What are his arguments, and what are we to make of them?

The Lesser of Two Evils

Buchanan’s main argument is summarized by a quotation from A.N. Wilson, cited deep in the text: “The tragedy of the twentieth century is that in order to defeat Hitler, Churchill believed it was not merely necessary but desirable to ally himself to Stalin” (379). Buchanan believes that Nazism and communism were both bad, but that communism was the greater threat. He accepts Hitler’s repeated insistence that the Third Reich never desired war with the British Empire. From here he concludes that Britain and France should have consigned central and eastern Europe to Hitler, hoping that Germany and Russia would destroy one another in a clash of titans, while the democracies held a defensible line in the west.

Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin hoped as much too. But his successor, Neville Chamberlain, egged on by Churchill, committed “the greatest blunder in history” by guaranteeing Poland against German attack after Hitler had absorbed the rump Czech state Chamberlain thought he and Hitler had guaranteed at Munich. Churchill compounded Chamberlain’s error by refusing to make terms with Hitler after the Battle of Britain proved the Empire could not easily be subdued. Thus hundreds of thousands died needlessly, the Empire was “lost,” and Eastern Europe was doomed to fifty years’ under barbarous communism. Churchill was wrong, and those who follow his example today create equally ruinous results. >>

1. Harry Elmer Barnes (1889-1968) was the first revisionist historian of World War II. A mainstream supporter of the Allied effort during and after World War I, he later came to doubt that the war had been a battle for democracy or that Germany bore sole responsibility for its instigation. Initially pro-Franklin Roosevelt, Barnes became an outspoken critic when he perceived that the President was moving towards the British view of the Nazis. His books and articles were highly regarded before World War II. Afterward, criticizing U.S. involvement in the two world wars, he wrote that the country must “throw off the yoke and menace of globalance and interventionism.”

Churchill Centre Book Club
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UNNECESSARY WAR...

This argument has been made before and will persist as long as twentieth-century history is studied. Buchanan contends that by 1939, Stalin's victims already numbered in the millions, while Hitler's as yet numbered only in the hundreds. The Soviet Union founded the Comintern to spread its poison around the globe, while the Fascists considered their ideology unique to their cultures and unsuitable for export. Therefore, the greater danger was clear before the war. *Quod erat demonstrandum.*

The Real Danger

Like many polemicists, Buchanan cannot resist over-egg ing the pudding. Any facts that stand in the way of his thesis are tweaked or ignored. But before we come to that, let us consider how Churchill himself addressed the issue of peace with Hitler before the Second World War began.

Speaking to the House of Commons at the time of the Munich Agreement and still before the horror of Kristallnacht, Churchill said:

> You must have diplomatic and correct relations, but there can never be friendship between the British democracy and the Nazi Power, that power which spurns Christian ethics, which cheers its onward course by a barbarous paganism, which vaunts the spirit of aggression and conquest, which derives strength and perverted pleasure from persecution, and uses, as we have seen, with pitiless brutality the threat of murderous force. That power cannot ever be the trusted friend of the British democracy.

What I find unendurable is the sense of our country falling into the power, into the orbit and influence of Nazi Germany, and of our existence becoming dependent upon their good will or pleasure. It is to prevent that that I have tried my best to urge the maintenance of every bulwark of defence. ...We do not want to be led upon the high road to becoming a satellite of the German Nazi system of European domination. In a very few years, perhaps in a very few months, we shall be confronted with demands with which we shall no doubt be invited to comply. Those demands may affect the surrender of territory or the surrender of liberty. I foresee and foretell that the policy of submission will carry with it restrictions upon the freedom of speech and debate in Parliament, on public platforms, and discussions in the Press.²

Churchill, as Buchanan acknowledges, was the first to perceive the evil of both communism and Nazism. Yet, based on knowledge and experience, Churchill had no doubt which force represented the greater danger at the time. And that really is the key.

> We do not know how a Nazi-dominated Europe would have played out had Hitler been given a free hand to destroy the Soviet Union, except that the Holocaust would have been immeasurably worse, Stalin's crimes were vast, but the elimination of an entire race of people was not among them; Stalin's 1932-33 collectivization programs caused the death by starvation of as many Ukrainians as Hitler killed Jews; but Stalin's aim was to communize, not to eradicate a race. Churchill, the furious anti-communist, preferred a Soviet alliance to the prospect of a Hitler-dominated Europe. Why? There were sound reasons.

Second Reich (1871-1919)

Buchanan begins with an examination of the origins of the First World War in an effort to show that British policymakers, including Churchill, initiated the fall of Britain's Empire with the first "unnecessary" conflict. In surveying why Britain went to war in 1914, Buchanan cites Churchill's remark to Lloyd George: "One cause alone should justify our participation—to prevent France from being trampled down & looted by the Prussian Junkers³—a disaster ruinous to the world, & fatal to our country" (40).

Buchanan does not accept Churchill's analysis—and it is here that his argument starts to fall apart.

Buchanan's Second Reich is essentially pacifist. He cites Niall Ferguson's view that "all the economic clauses of the [1914] September Programme⁴ implied was the creation—some eighty years early, it might be said—of a German-dominated customs union" (61).

Indeed so. Except that the Germans proposed to implement this under threat of force, at which democratic nations understandably balked. It is Buchanan's inability to see the difference between the Kaiser's Germany and the western democracies that reveals his lack of understanding about the Great War, and his appalling ignorance of German history.

Buchanan insists that nineteenth-century Britain was more belligerent than Germany. He argues, for example, that the three wars of Bismarck's Prussia were either inconsequential or instigated by other nations (59). This contradicts the near-universal view that Bismarck (Germany's "Iron Chancellor") cleverly provoked all three wars to achieve the unification of Germany.

The Second Reich was born through military conquest. Yet, the new nation was still beset by centuries-old religious and sectional differences. Military service through universal conscription was the one factor that the male population of the new Germany had in common. Respect for the nation's military bound the Kaiser's subjects together, and therein set their doom.

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³ The Junkers were landed nobility of Prussia and eastern Germany; they controlled the Prussian Army, held leading political influence and social status, and owned immense tracts of land.

⁴ Germany's war objectives, announced 9 September 1914 by Reich Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg: annexation of Belgium, northern France, and the Baltic region; a comprehensive "European economic zone" under Berlin's control; and a German colonial empire in central Africa.
One wishes Buchanan had taken the time to read the work of Gordon Craig, whose _Germany 1866-1945_ (1978) lays bare the flaws of the Second Reich. Germany’s problem was systemic: its structure of government was simply unsuited to the management of a modern industrialized state. The nation had become a great power before it began to act like one.

In his early chapters Buchanan has the annoying habit of discussing the Kaiser and British monarchs as though they were of equal political stature. Only much later in the book does it suit him to acknowledge that British monarchs were of the constitutional variety. The German emperor was no such thing: he was the nexus of national variety. The German emperor was no such thing: he was the nexus of an entire government. He appointed all ministers, independent of the Reichstag, an elective body with no real power. Military appropriations were rubber-stamped; policy input was neither required nor desired. As with the cabinet, the military staffs answered directly to the Kaiser. There was no civilian oversight of the armed forces.

Buchanan tries to portray Wilhelm II as less aggressive than British or French leaders chosen through democratic processes. In truth, the Kaiser was at best an amiable fool quite incapable of managing the machinery of government. In such cases, power defaults to the next level—and in Germany that meant an unsupervised, Junker-dominated military, spoiling for a fight and enjoying the support of most Germans.

Disaster anyone? France, Britain, Italy and the United States, democracies all, survived the war on the winning side. It was not by chance that the defeated nations turned out to be Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Ottoman Empire and Tsarist Russia (which surrendered in 1917 despite having aligned herself at the outset with the side that ultimately won).

Not prepared for the war they got, each of the major combatants had to change strategies during the conflict, and that meant changing both civilian and military leadership. In democratic nations, this could be done peacefully by constitutional means. In the autocratic nations, no change was possible without revolution. Lacking similar flexibility, the autocracies failed catastrophically under the strain of war.

Churchill appreciated this key difference. Professor Paul Addison, in his 2007 _Churchill biography_, cites an incident, described by Liberal MP Alexander MacCallum Scott: On the evening of 5 March 1917, exiting a darkened Commons chamber, Churchill turned to Scott and said:

> Look at it. This little place is what makes the difference between us and Germany. It is in virtue of this that we shall muddle through to success & for lack of this Germany’s brilliant efficiency leads her to final disaster.”

Buchanan’s unforgivable error is his omission of Churchill’s efforts to avert war. Once it began, Churchill’s “crime” was to prosecute it vigorously—while the admirable Prime Minister continued to feel guilty, to wring his hands, and to chatter about secret Cabinet discussions to his lady friend. Surely this is the difference between one who is suited to be a war leader and one who is not? Germany would suspend their blue water arms race by halting construction of new warships. Churchill renewed the proposal in 1913. The German Press and the Kaiser spurned it.

As late as May 1914 Churchill was still trying to arrange a meeting to discuss his proposal with Admiral Tirpitz, a meeting vetoed by Asquith. Even as the July crisis unfolded, Churchill suggested an emergency meeting of the European heads of state as a forum enabling the politicians to work out a peaceful solution. Buchanan mentions none of this. A warmonger he needs Churchill to be, so a warmonger he must be depicted.

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**The Great War (1914–18)**

In the run-up to 1914, Buchanan takes pains to portray Churchill as a warmonger. He cites his belligerence during the July 1914 crisis—belligerent for reasons explained in the preceding paragraphs. He cites Asquith’s famous letter from the start of the war:

> “Winston, who has got on all his war paint, is longing for a sea fight.…the whole thing fills me with sadness.”

Churchill’s “crime,” the book implies, was to prosecute the war vigorously once it had begun—while the admirable Prime Minister continued to feel guilty, to wring his hands, and to chatter about secret Cabinet discussions to his lady friend.

Surely this is the difference between one who is suited to be a war leader and one who is not? Churchill, not a vacillating Asquith or a weak Chamberlain.

Buchanan’s unforgivable error is his omission of Churchill’s efforts to avert war. In _Churchill’s Cold War_ (2002), Professor Klaus Larres detailed Churchill’s personal diplomacy with Germany before the “Guns of August.” As First Lord of the Admiralty in 1911, Churchill proposed a “naval holiday,” whereby Britain and
UNNECESSARY WAR...

World War II (1939-45)

Strangely, given the book’s title, Churchill all but disappears for the next eleven chapters, reemerging nearly 300 pages later as the star of the penultimate chapter. In between, Buchanan attacks the Versailles Treaty, traces the rise of Hitler and blasts the misguided policies of MacDonald, Baldwin and Chamberlain. In 1939 we reach his central contention, “the greatest blunder in history”: Chamberlain’s guarantee to Poland. ("Greatest blunder? How do the Germans feel about starting and losing two world wars?)

None of this provides much ground for denigrating Churchill, so Buchanan exaggerates WSC’s role by describing him as a virtual one-man opposition, more formidable, apparently, than the entire Labour Party, which is scarcely mentioned. Chamberlain would be surprised to know he was stampeded into the Polish guarantee by Churchill—whom he studiously ignored.

Like many revisionists, Buchanan disregards the political realities facing elected leaders. Poland may have been the worst place to draw the line (as WSC stated); but politically it was the first place where the line could be drawn. By then, the nation was convinced that Hitler could not be trusted, and that a Nazi continent was unacceptable.

Buchanan insists that Hitler did not wish to fight Britain, citing the insightful Sir Horace Rumbold, British ambassador in Berlin in 1933, who cogently identified Hitler’s world-view (317). But he neglects to mention that Sir Horace warned London that Hitler had no respect for the pledged word, and was not to be trusted. For this offense, Rumbold was recalled and replaced by a more compliant diplomat.

Churchill observed in 1938 that “there never can be any absolute certainty that there will be a fight if one side is determined that it will give way completely.” But the decision not to give way over Poland was made before Churchill was in the Cabinet, by an elected government; and few objections were raised except by the Stalinist left. This point conflicts with Buchanan’s thesis—and is therefore ignored.

Buchanan might have saved himself the trouble of writing this chapter by simply requesting permission from Christopher Hitchens to reprint his notorious hatchet job, published six years ago in the Atlantic Monthly. Buchanan argues that it was Churchill who, in desperation, started the terror bombing of civilians, which invites a query: What was the Luftwaffe doing over Guernica, Poland and Rotterdam? Or, for that matter, what were the Zeppelins doing over England in the First World War?

Similarly, Buchanan blasts the Dresden raid in February 1945 as of no military value, omitting to mention that it took place at Soviet request, and took pressure off of their army, as had been hoped. Finally, Buchanan insists (373) that for Churchill, Poland had never been more than a cynical excuse for going to war: “Did Churchill ever give a damn about Poland?” No mention is made of Churchill’s futile effort to obtain Stalin’s approval for RAF bombers to fly in support of the Warsaw uprising, a plan that could work only if the planes could land and refuel on Soviet-controlled territory.

Buchanan also ignores Churchill’s efforts at Yalta to get the best deal he could for Poland. Using primary sources, Sir Martin Gilbert set out all that Churchill did for Poland in detail in the seventh volume of the official biography, twenty-two years ago.

The “Lost” World

Buchanan winds up by describing the inevitable consequences of the Unnecessary War: a communist eastern Europe and Britain’s end as an imperial power. Predictably he overlooks Winston Churchill’s repeated efforts to convince the Americans of strategies that would have kept the Allies deeper in Europe by war’s end. Failing in that, Churchill traveled to Moscow to meet with Stalin and salvage what he could with his famous “naughty document.” This Buchanan does describe, only to label it a “sell-out”—which is also his view of Yalta. No mention is made of Churchill’s perilous trip to Athens over Christmas 1944 to secure Greece against communist control, in accord with the Moscow agreement.

Pat Buchanan must be one of the remaining few (certainly the last Irishman) who deems the British Empire a “loss.” Fact: the major Dominions were self-governing before World War I, virtually autonomous before World War II. Fact: Britain committed herself to independence for India in 1935; WW2 actually impeded the process. Fact: of the remaining rocks and islands, Suez and the Middle East mandates (which Buchanan confuses for colonies), many were acquired to secure the British route to India, and became superfluous when Indian autonomy was guaranteed.

Buchanan believes that outcome was a disaster. Yet in Churchill’s lifetime a British prime minister could famously tell the voters, “You’ve never had it so good.” Fifty years since Harold Macmillan’s expostulation, Britons enjoy their highest standard of living in history. The same can be said for most other former elements of the British Empire, including India—Zimbabwe being the most notable exception at the moment.

It has been said that the Empire never ended but was transformed: From an octopus with a single head and many arms, it became a school of fish—separate but related organisms freely cooperating for the greater good. The key to success has been the institutions of representative democracy and the rule of law imparted by the mother country Churchill loved, and nurtured by her offspring. These traditions, dearly acquired and dearly defended, had no greater champion than Winston Churchill.

Wikipedia Dot Wrong

ANDREW ROBERTS

Was Sir Winston Churchill an oafish, bloodthirsty, sadistic, hypocritical, anti-Semitic alcoholic? The American novelist Nicholson Baker—whose previous works have been about phone-sex and masturbation—certainly seems to think so, but he uses the technique of juxtaposing bald quotations, ripped out of context, to try to place Churchill on the same moral plane as Adolf Hitler.

The first trick is one of which Dr. Goebbels himself was proud: the Big Lie. By quoting a couple of sentences from an article Churchill wrote in The Illustrated Sunday Herald on 8 February 1920 about Jews being involved in a “sinister” and “worldwide conspiracy,” Baker implies that Churchill was an anti-Semite. Yet if one goes back to the original article, it is immediately clear that Churchill was only referring to those Russian Jews who had embraced Bolshevism. “We owe to the Jews,” he wrote in that same article (not quoted by Baker), “a system of ethics which, even if it were entirely separated from the supernatural, would be incomparably the most precious possession of mankind, worth in fact the fruits of all wisdom and learning put together.”
between tear gas and Zyklon B should not be writing history.

Of Europe’s Jews in November 1940, Baker writes that “Hitler didn’t want them,” preferring them to live in Madagascar, whereas “Churchill wanted to starve them until they revolted against their oppressors.” The truth was that Hitler wanted the Jews dead, and Churchill never wanted to starve them at all. To pretend otherwise is ludicrous, but then, as Baker explains in an interview on Amazon.com: “I used Wikipedia during the writing of the book, especially to check facts.”

Further on, Baker argues that Churchill was “the chief obstacle” to feeding the starving peoples of Holland, Belgium, Poland and Norway, ignoring the fact that all food distribution was in Nazi hands in all those countries, and donations from abroad would have fed Germans, not their victims. Churchill himself is amply on record as saying that the responsibility for the populace of occupied countries lies with those who occupy them.

The book is dedicated to prewar and wartime “American and British pacifists” who, Baker claims, “failed, but they were right.” In fact it was they who bore much of the responsibility for allowing Hitler to believe that the West would not fight, thus actually helping to bring on precisely the war they feared.

The greatest hero is Mahatma Gandhi, who is treated entirely on his own terms as a saintly swami. It was Gandhi who, during the London Blitz, advised Londoners to “Invite Hitler and Mussolini to take what they want of the countries you call your possess-
sions. Let them take possession of your beautiful island with its many beautiful buildings. You will give all this, but neither your minds nor your souls.”

Most of Baker’s quotations come from The New York Times, which he absurdly describes as “the single richest resource for the history and prehistory of the war years.” In fact that paper consistently underplayed Nazi atrocities, burying appallingly brief reports of the Holocaust deep inside the paper. On 27 June 1942, for example, the Times devoted just two inches to the news that “700,000 Jews were reported slain in Poland.” On 25 November, it reported the roundups, gassings and disappearance of 90 percent of Warsaw’s ghetto population on page 10. The following month, Baker’s journal of record divulged that two million Jews had been killed and five million more faced death on page 20. On 2 July 1944, the Times reported that 400,000 Hungarian Jews had been deported to their deaths, and 350,000 more faced the same fate—four column inches on page 12. (The front page carried an analysis of the problem of New York holiday crowds on the move.) The shameful truth is that during the Second World War, no article about the Jews’ plight ever qualified as the Times’ leading story of the day, nor has the Times ever properly acknowledged its failings in this matter. Yet this is the paper that Mr. Baker uses as his central resource.

Baker regularly chooses to take Churchill’s jokes seriously, out of a lack of humour or on purpose. Thus when in 1922 Churchill told the Commons that Berlin would have been bombed if the Great War had continued much longer, and only survived “owing to our having run short of Germans and enemies before the experiments were completed,” Baker chooses to ignore the obvious gag. In October 1940, when a Conservative MP demanded the unrestricted bombing of German population centres, Churchill replied: “You and others may desire to kill women and children,” but the Government would restrict itself to military objectives, because: “My motto is ‘Business before pleasure.’” It was a joke, presented by Baker as if Churchill was a murderous sadist.

The above anecdote is also capable of another interpretation, one that undermines Baker’s accusations that the British Government did indeed deliberately target civilian populations rather than military and industrial installations. So keen is he to heap ordure on Churchill that he thus contradicts his own assertions.

Baker also contradicts himself when quoting a letter from Churchill to his Information Minister, Alfred Duff Cooper, from June 1940, saying that the press and broadcast media “should be asked to handle air raids in a cool way and on a diminishing tone of public interest. Pray try to impress this upon the newspaper authorities and persuade them to help.” If the British media was under heavy censorship, as Baker states, would the Prime Minister be asking the Information Minister to “persuade” the press barons “to help,” or ordering them?

Churchill—without Baker giving any proof whatsoever—is also allegedly accused of being complicit in the notorious forgery known as the Zinoviev Letter, which led to the downfall of Ramsay MacDonald’s Labour government in the 1924 general election. Speculation upon insinuation, which is all Baker producing, does not amount to evidence in a work of non-fiction. A statement

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One of Hitler’s passing fancies, never serious and rejected early. See the chapter entitled “Hitler’s Decision to Commit Genocide” in Ian Kershaw’s thoughtful book Fateful Choices (Penguin, 2007), reviewed FH 136.
like “Everyone agreed that Churchill was a maladroit administrator and a capricious military strategist,” needs to be qualified by the fact that Churchill enjoyed popularity ratings—in 1940 as today—far higher than any other British prime minister since opinion polling began. Who is “Everyone”?

Small mistakes, such as the size of the War Cabinet—five, not sixteen—or the colours of Churchill’s siren suits (not just blue), or the correct spelling of Ditchley Park, are inevitable if Baker prefers Internet search engines to first-hand archival research. But if he is to make Churchill out to be malevolent and dishonest at every turn, the author ought to have produced better source references than www.authentichistory.com, and intellectually discredited spook-writers like John Costello. These do not constitute a scholarly apparatus.

The mass arrest of ethnic Germans—including Jews—in Britain during the invasion scare of 1940 is equated to the contemporaneous mass roundups of Jews on the Continent, without the rather central difference being pointed out that 50,000 were released by the end of the year in Britain, whereas in Europe the Jews’ fate was very different. Hitler’s invasion of Yugoslavia is blamed on King Peter II’s coup there, which was “encouraged and funded by the British Special Operations Executive,” without mentioning how popular it was with ordinary Yugoslavs. As so often, Baker shows the Führer merely responding to provocations and aggressions by the inveterate warmonger Churchill.

(Needless to say, there are also historically irrelevant references to Fallujah and Basra—both obscure backwaters during World War II—in order to make modern-day political points.)

Sharing the villainy with Churchill is the Royal Air Force. Bald, stand-alone paragraphs state, “The RAF dropped more than 150 tons of bombs on India. It was 1925.” This is meant to imply that the British were terrorizing their Indian subjects. In fact, Wing Commander R.C.M. Pink’s 5th, 27th and 60th squadrons were bombing the Mahsud raiders in Waziristan in order to protect peaceful agrarian Indians of the plains below the North-West Frontier. Between 9 August and 18 November 1919, Mahsud and Wazir raiders committed 182 outrages in Zhob, Derajat and the Punjab during which they killed a total of 225 people, wounded and kidnapped 400 more, and carried off large numbers of animals and a wealth of movable property.

Today the 1925 aerial campaign is taught as a textbook example of how to pacify one of the most difficult regions of the world, where Osama bin Laden is thought to be hiding out. Of course if Baker’s insinuation was true, and the RAF were trying to terrorize 300 million Indians, 150 tons of bombs would not have done it. The huge majority of Indians supported the punishment of the Waziri tribes for their incursions. You would never guess this from Mr. Baker.

Baker seems to have read all the books that criticize the aerial bombing of Germany, but none of those explaining and defending it feature in his (generally insubstantial) bibliography. Nor is mention made of the testimony from Joseph Goebbels and Albert Speer, that Allied bombing significantly weakened the Third Reich’s ability to continue fighting.

Instead Baker ludicrously states that “Bombing was, to Churchill, a way of enlightening city dwellers as to the hellishness of remote battlefields by killing them.” Every time the RAF hit a girl’s school rather than a railway marshalling yard it is recorded, as though the kind of precision bombing available today was present in the aerial armoury seven decades ago. At one point Baker even writes of how “The British leaders were now in place for the pan-Germanic firestorms of 1942, 1943, 1944 and 1945.”

Churchill is even tangentially blamed for the Holocaust; Baker quotes approvingly the view that “as soon as England made its peace with Germany and stopped blockading ocean traffic—the Jews would go away [to Madagascar] after being stripped of whatever wealth they might have. It was all contingent, though, on peace with Churchill.” The fact that an offer of an unimpeded passage of Jews was never made does not prevent Baker from insinuating that the idea was scuppered by Churchill’s obsession.
A Mantra, Not a Book

WARREN F. KIMBALL

OK. I have forced myself to sit down and write a review of the non-book entitled Human Smoke. What is it? Why is it so difficult to review? I finally realized that it is not possible critically to review a mantra: an unthinking chant, like prayer wheels, rosaries and worry beads. Monotonous repetition may be an effective appeal, but it is an appeal to emotion, not reason. It is not history.

History has some simple demands: a marshaling of evidence; an honest analysis of cause and effect; a story based on that evidence. Baker’s non-book offers, at best, disjointed fragments of the truth. (Please, no existentialist arguments about “what is truth?” I am happy to go on about such things. Simon & Schuster should be ashamed of themselves for perpetrating a fraud on the public, but this profiteering absolves all sins. Perhaps most shameful of all is the reviewer for the Los Angeles Times (I omit his name since notoriety must be what he sought) who blandly and blindly asserted that Human Smoke is “a meticulously researched and well-constructed book demonstrating that World War II was one of the biggest, most carefully plotted lies in modern history.”)

Google the non-book and you will find a long list of reviews that compare Baker’s fragments—an appalling number of them so out of context or incorrect as to constitute real lies—to the facts. The striking examples provided by Andrew Roberts in the foregoing review leave Baker hoist on his own petard, and I leave much of the hand-to-hand combat to him.

It’s always open season on leaders like Churchill and Roosevelt, people who made tough decisions—because they sell books, even non-books. Yes, they sanctioned ugly and sometimes unsuccessful actions in the course of the war. And yes, each war seems to

"HUMAN SMOKE..." with blockade. When others in the drama (including Hitler) “say” things, Baker has Churchill “booming” or “haranguing.” There is even a reference to the Führer’s “conscience”! Winston Churchill, of course, has none.

“Churchill was, as they say of generals, a killer of men,” writes Baker. It is almost impossible to mention a national leader in history whose decisions have not led to the deaths of men. To govern is to choose; to lead a nation is either to sanction killing or surrender. Having recently returned from a trip to Auschwitz-Birkenau, which was only half the size the Nazis planned to make it before it was liberated, I find the prospect of a Nazi-dominated Europe just as abhorrent as that of a Nazi-liberated, I find the prospect of a Nazi-dominated Europe just as abhorrent as

A curious torpor overcomes the reader half way through this book, due to the sheer, inexorable bias. If it had been more nuanced, better researched or more intelligent, interest might have been sustained. But sometimes the sheer ignorance of some of Baker’s statements reignites interest, such as: “If Hitler moved East, England would have no war to fight.” The author believes that Britain should have accepted Hitler’s offer of peace in August 1940, not realising that it was designed to facilitate his long-desired invasion of the USSR, which he was contemporaneously ordering the Wehrmacht to plan.

It is impossible to escape the conclusion that Nicholson Baker would have done better to stick to phone-sex and masturbation. The book ends in December 1941, after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. (Of course Baker concentrates as much on the “dozens” of Honolulu civilians who fell victim to “misfiring American anti-aircraft shells” than on the thousands of servicemen killed by the Japanese.)

The title of the book refers to a phrase that the author claims was made by the former German Chief of Staff, Franz Halder when imprisoned in Auschwitz late in the war: he saw “flakes of human smoke” blow into his cell (474). It’s a powerful image. Sadly, Halder never in fact set foot in Auschwitz. He was held in Dachau and Flossenburg after the July 1944 assassination plot against Hitler.

It is fitting that Baker should have even misattributed the very title of his book. Perhaps he should have checked Wikipedia.

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expand the boundaries of inhumanity. FDR failed to do as much as he might have to rescue the victims of Nazism, even though what was possible was pitifully little, symbolic more than practical, though symbols should have mattered for a believer in the American Declaration of Independence and the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution. Churchill did not need callously to call for punishing civilians in Germany, though history knows that Hitler’s appalling popularity depended on his appeal to civilians. We know from wartime intelligence that targeting civilians did not break German morale during World War II, nor did it stop Hitler from launching similar attacks. The Blitz eventually gave way to V-2 rockets. There is little if any evidence that Allied embargoes on food contributed to their victory in Europe. But those are Baker’s epigrammatic targets.

The following juxtaposition of fragments offers a striking example of Baker’s intellectual silliness. He offers a quote from Gandhi (112): “without the German people, he [Hitler] was nothing and the German people would in the end be touched by nonviolence.” (Pacifists are, for Baker, invariably perceptive.) That is quickly followed by a comment on Hitler from FDR: “We would call him a nut. But there isn’t any use calling him a nut because he is a power and we have to recognize that” (114-15). “Hence the need for thousands of airplanes,” adds Baker portentously. Huh?

There are quotes in the non-book that challenge the self-justificatory excuse-making by Churchill, Roosevelt, the UK, and the USA. But they are ripped so far out of context that the woof and warp of history is undetectable. Worse, Baker’s major players are consistently and overwhelmingly without ideals—except for Adolf Hitler. Baker’s minor players—Gandhi, Quakers, victims—can think no wrong. Where, one wonders, is the banality of evil? What happened to “the search for AH?”

There have been powerful attacks on the brutality of war since recorded history. Even the Second World War—“the good war”—generated memorable protests. For me, two motion pictures come to mind: “Saving Private Ryan” combined a scream of anger at the (probably unnecessary) slaughter on Omaha Beach with a story of bureaucratic bungling; and “The Americanization of Emily,” with James Garner’s tirade against the cynical glorification of war with medals and honors—again, the target was the Omaha Beach debacle.

Those were honest attacks on the futility and horror of war that used history legitimately. Baker’s baloney is dishonest—making it not only ineffective, but insulting. Reading the non-book, one has the sense that Baker accounts for nearly every bomb dropped on Germany. Yet the London Blitz is barely mentioned, and then together with a satisfied (or sarcastic?) comment by one Londoner: “After all, our chaps are doing this every night to the Germans” (227).

One can make a good case that bombing civilian targets is ineffective. “Shock and Awe” may have worked against Saddam Hussein’s military, but subsequent events demonstrate that it failed to subdue civilians. The London Blitz, and the even more destructive indiscriminate pounding of Malta (see next review) only stiffened morale. The atomic bomb may have prompted Japan to surrender sooner, but how far away was Japan’s surrender without it? The 9/11 atrocity angered and united Americans—hardly bin Laden’s goal. But distorted faux-history is not the way to make that case.

The sarcastic slur on pacifists is that by refusing to fight they condemn the very people who fight for their freedom. But such freedom brings with it the responsibility to be honest with the evidence, whatever one’s convictions. Baker has shirked that duty.

One Man and an Island

CHRISTOPHER H. STERLING

Winston Churchill visited Malta six times, and around those visits an interesting history has been constructed. Part of a growing trend of “Churchill and…” books, this one focuses on the tiny but vital real estate in the middle of the Mediterranean. An archipelago of seven islands, three inhabited, Malta had been a British colony since the early 1800s and for a time it was the largest Royal Navy base outside Britain. The Maltese author was a long-time banker before becoming a military historian; this is his second study of Malta’s role in British military history.

Churchill first saw (but didn’t visit) Malta en route to India in 1896, when he scanned the island’s shoreline with a new telescope presented to
him by his mother. A decade later he arrived at the fortified city of Valletta and its Grand Harbour, on the way to East Africa as Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies. In that office, Churchill was drawn into Malta’s quest for local government and a constitution. He stayed nearly a week, enjoying the palatial former palace of the Grand Master of the Knights of Malta.

In May 1912, now First Lord of the Admiralty, Churchill sailed into the Grand Harbour on the Admiralty yacht *Enchantress* for a three-day meeting with Lord Kitchener, who had arrived from Alexandria. At issue was security in the Mediterranean, and specifically, what portion of the Royal Navy would be based in Malta, Alexandria and Gibraltar. WSC returned a year later on *Enchantress* (her final prewar voyage), this time with Prime Minister H.H. Asquith, among others. A number of Royal Navy battlecruisers was now in the harbor, indicating Malta’s growing importance as a naval base.

In January 1927, now Chancellor of the Exchequer, Churchill came to visit Admiral Roger Keyes at Admiralty House in Valletta (now the island’s museum of art). Here he played his final game of polo, at age 53. After three days, he went on to Rome to meet, and initially to be impressed by, Benito Mussolini.

Il Duce had been dismissed, arrested, and rescued by Hitler when Churchill paid his fifth call on Malta, this time aboard HMS *Renown*, in November 1943. For the space of a couple of days he toured the dockyard and other areas, usually to thunderous applause from the Maltese. His sixth and final visit came in January 1945 on the way to the Yalta conference. This time he arrived on his new, four-engined C-54 “Skymaster” (military version of the DC-4), though he slept aboard HMS *Orion* to get the peace and quiet he had missed in 1943. Not in the best of health, he limited his excursions, meeting Roosevelt on the island before they both flew separately to the Crimea.

Churchill’s six visits form the core of Austin’s tale, but he fleshes out his study with discussions that provide context on the man and the island. Half his book is devoted to Malta’s heroic resistance during the war, especially during 1940-42, when Axis air raids caused much damage and carnage. Supplies ran low and rationing was begun. For a time, three “Gladiator” biplane fighter aircraft—soon dubbed Faith, Hope, and Charity—provided the only air cover. The situation began to improve after the Allied invasion of North Africa in November 1942. Austin describes Churchill’s concern for the survival of Malta through this period, drawing from documents at the British National Archives. Interestingly, Churchill’s own Malta file stops with 1943, one indicator of the war’s turning tide.

While his total time on the ground in Malta was only two weeks over a period of four decades, Churchill did play a large role in the island’s history. Concerned with Malta’s governance before the war, he focused on its strategic location and value (and the Axis threat to that status) from 1940 through 1943—to a perhaps surprising degree given other battlefronts. He never returned after the war, preferring the French Riviera. Malta achieved independence in 1964, and is a member of the Commonwealth and the European Union.

Douglas Austin’s history sheds useful insights and deserved light into Churchillian corners not well covered elsewhere. As Sir Martin Gilbert concludes in his foreword, it offers “both true history and high drama.”

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**Leading Myths: Coventry is Back**

**MICHAEL RICHARDS**

Amazing what a life these legends have. Last March, Alan Pollock trotted out the old canard that Churchill, warned of the German attack on Coventry on the night of 14-15 November 1940 by the code-breakers at Bletchley Park, deliberately did not warn Coventry and let the city be razed rather than reveal his sources of secret intelligence.

The BBC discussion tried to duck criticism by saying Pollock’s tale was “controversial,” referring to our own definitive article by Peter Mclver (“Leading Churchill Myths,” *Finest Hour* 41, http://xrl.us/dfx99). It’s not controversial at all. It is verifiable bunk, and only cranks or the ignorant still believe it. The BBC did admit that “most historians disagree” with Pollock, but they could not resist adding that, as far as The Churchill Centre is concerned, “they would say that.”

No, we would not say that—not if the Coventry myth had a shred of evidence to back it up. Churchill made lots of mistakes, but sacrificing Coventry in some weird attempt to convince the Germans he didn’t know what they were planning is not only out of character, but denied by the facts, which are as follows:

Churchill, motoring to the country on the afternoon of 14 November 1940, opened a secret intelligence despatch predicting that the raid would be on London. As was his wont, he immediately returned to London to await the air raid that never came. When, belatedly, he was told that the raid was aimed at Coventry, he scrambled fighters to intercept the German bombers, but it was a case of too little and too late.
“I guffawed over Billington’s comparison of this theatrical production with what Noël Coward said about Lionel Bart’s Blitz: ‘Half as long as the original and twice as loud.’”

Michael Billington, reviewing the play in The Guardian, could not be more right: “Pollock’s larger purpose is to suggest that Churchill, forewarned of the German attack, deliberately sacrificed the citizens of Coventry....But, given the gravity of Pollock’s accusation against Churchill, his play is strangely short of proof....What one craves is some discussion of Churchill’s ultimate purpose and the practicality of evacuating a whole city, thereby alerting the Germans of our access to their intelligence.” It would have made no sense to do what WSC is accused of doing.

The play, Billington said, “resembles a trial in which the accused is conspicuous by his absence.” I guffawed over his comparison of this production to what Noël Coward said about Lionel Bart’s Blitz: “Half as long as the original and twice as loud.”

Postscript
ROBERT COURTS
CHURCHILL CENTRE UK

I wonder if it is worth making the point, entirely missed by everyone who makes this allegation against Churchill, that the RAF had very little with which to counter bombing raids at this stage of the war anyway?

The RAF simply did not then have a proper night-fighting system. Unlike the very well coordinated day fighter defence scheme, in 1940 night-fighting was largely a matter of making do with what they had, since little planning had been put into night-fighting in the prewar years.

Only around the time of the major Coventry raid did the excellent Bristol Beaufighter begin to enter service, but alas in pitifully small numbers. The Mosquito was still in the future. The RAF was making do with Hurricanes (no radar, hardly effective) and the very slow Blenheim (a converted bomber).

Later in the war, when British pilots were flying against Germany and the Germans had a very effective night-fighter system (and some excellent aircraft, like the Ju88), it was not possible to stop a concentrated bomber force. You could seriously damage it and make the losses not worth bearing, but you could not stop it. You certainly could not stop it in 1940.

Even if the Coventry fiction were fact—and even if Churchill knew of the raid’s destination—how would he have “sacrificed” the city? He could only have done so convincingly if he did something to prevent the raid. He did not. Nor could Coventry be evacuated on a practical level.

In any event, it’s pleasing to see that Google brings up The Churchill Centre’s pages when one searches for material on the Coventry raid—right at the top.

The Horror Wasn’t Over

MARCUS FROST


Most books on World War II in Europe end on V-E Day, 8 May 1945, following Germany’s unconditional surrender. Professor David Stafford chose to look at the aftermath, through a unique cross section of nine people caught up in the final phases of the war and whose lives were deeply affected. His powerful account—he himself admits he was quite drained at the end of it—reveals the horrors that occurred in the wake of V-E Day, which the jacket describes as “merely a brief pause in the action.”

No stranger to Churchill studies, David Stafford, former executive director of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, is project director at the Centre for the Study of the Two World Wars at the University of Edinburgh. His Churchill works include Roosevelt and Churchill: Men of Secrets, and Churchill and Secret Service. This latest narrative addresses one of the least-covered aspects of World War II historiography.

Broken into four parts, Endgame 1945 begins on Hitler’s final birthday, 20 April 1945, and ends at the Potsdam conference, a three-month span packed with world-shaping events, but events seen through the eyes of ordinary people. We are witnesses as the concentration camps, Buchenwald and Dachau, are discovered and liberated; and as the Anglo-American forces race to get a victor’s foothold in Europe. The effects of total war have not ended with the German surrender; devastation and confusion are everywhere as the victors struggle to deal with prisoners of war, displaced persons, Holocaust survivors and the wounded and starving, while trying to establish a military administration in the defeated countries.

Many of Stafford’s characters are soldiers from American, Canadian, and British armies. Their battles take them from the Po River Valley in Italy to the Netherlands, where strong Nazi forces refuse to surrender and have to be >>

Mr. Frost is a member of the Churchill Centre’s board of trustees and active in both the San Antonio and North Texas chapters.
Old Titles Revisited: *The Paladin*

**RICHARD M. LANGWORTH**

A Gripping Novel?  
A Fictional Biography?  
*Finest Hour 48*  
Summer 1985

The story is impossible—fantastic. An eleven-year-old boy named Christopher Creighton leaps a garden wall in Kent one day and finds himself face to face with Winston Churchill, whom he will later know by the code-name “Tigger.” It is 1935.

Christopher, who continues to invade Chartwell, impresses WSC with his audacity and pluck, and in 1939, aged fifteen, he is recruited into the British Secret Service by a pair of spymasters known as “Owl” and “Winnie-the-Pooh.”

He then accomplishes a succession of what can only be termed “climacteries.” He warns of Belgium’s plans to surrender to Hitler in time to save the British Army at Dunkirk. (In fact, King Leopold issued warnings of his impending surrender in advance; see *FH 138*.) He finds secret U-boat pens in Ireland and blows the Germans’ most strategic cover for Atlantic warfare. He sabotages a friendly Dutch submarine and sends its crew to the bottom after it reports the Japanese battle fleet en route to Pearl Harbor—because Churchill refuses to pass the warning to Roosevelt, and the Americans *must not know*. Back in London, Christopher finishes the job by murdering a cipher clerk who has read the sub’s message—and she turns out to be one of his lady friends.

He engineers the assassination of Vichy’s treacherous Admiral Darlan, and tips off the Nazis to the Dieppe raid so they will meet it in force, convincing the Americans that it is too soon for a cross-channel invasion. Finally, when the invasion really *is* on, he steers the Germans into defending Calais and not Normandy. By which time Christopher Creighton is a good deal older, wiser, sadder and bloodier. But war is a dirty business!

Although the plot strains the imagination—so many conspiracies, all engineered by a boy—it is nonetheless gripping, well-written and plausible. Garfield’s characterization of Churchill tallies closely with the most authoritative accounts of WSC’s intimates; the vivid scenes at the “hole in the ground” (Cabinet War Rooms) are painted with authority. Ribbentrop, the Belgians and French, the British and German secret agents, are entirely believable, based on what we know from the history books. Brian Garfield is more plausible than Len Deighton, as exciting as Ian Fleming. His novel is splendid entertainment for the highly committed Churchillian, and you should definitely add a copy to your library of tall tales.

One thing more. “The hero is a real person,” Garfield wrote in 1980. “He is now in his fifties. His name is not Christopher Creighton.”

We’ve often thought that the Churchill novels of Michael Dobbs are so well scripted, so faithful to the real-life characters in them—and that we would not be surprised to see them quoted by some careless future writer as actually having said what Michael has them say. Well, Brian Garfield had a twenty-year head start, and guess what. A few years ago, “Christopher Creighton” surfaced, purporting to write a book about his adventures. We report, you decide.

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*ENDGAME 1945...*  
eliminated in a battle to the death.  
Stafford shows us “endgame” as these soldiers saw it, through diaries, letters, personal testimonies and memoirs.  
One of them, fighting for the British, is of German-Jewish descent, forced out of Germany by Hitler’s pogroms. Another character is a BBC war correspondent who follows Patton’s army as it races through Germany.

Two women characters are a British relief worker and a German married to an Italian, one of Hitler’s political prisoners, along with her two sons. The relief worker tries to assuage the suffering continent; the German woman endures concentration camps, the fate of her two young sons unknown, herself not knowing whether she will live or be executed.

David Stafford skillfully weaves the lives of his characters with history as it unfolds. He describes in fine detail the lives of his characters with history she will live or be executed.

At the end of this book you will be as drained as the author was, and perhaps glad not to have experienced their fate. Nor does his book leave us perhaps glad not to have experienced their intensely personal stories.

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At the end of this book you will be as drained as the author was, and perhaps glad not to have experienced their fate. Nor does his book leave us perhaps glad not to have experienced their intensely personal stories.
Indigenous Peoples

“...the Boers would regard it as a breach of that treaty if the franchise were in the first instance extended to any persons who are not white men. Meanwhile we make certain reservations.”

In view of recent statements after erection of the Mandela monument in Parliament Square, to the effect that Churchill cared nothing for native populations and worked with Smuts to create in the Transvaal constitution the basis for Apartheid in South Africa (FH 136, 52-55), we thought this excerpt interesting. It is from Churchill’s speech, “The Transvaal Constitution” (House of Commons, 31 July 1906; Liberalism and the Social Problem, Collected Works edition, 1974, 137):

Under the Treaty of Vereeniging we undertook that no franchise should be extended to natives before the grant of self-government. I am not going to plunge into the argument as to what the word ‘native’ means, in its legal or technical character, because in regard to such a treaty, upon which we are relying for such grave issues, we must be bound very largely by the interpretation which the other party places upon it; and it is undoubted that the Boers would regard it as a breach of that treaty if the franchise were in the first instance extended to any persons who are not white men. We may regret that decision. We may regret that there is no willingness in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony to make arrangements which have been found not altogether harmful in Cape Colony. But we are bound by this treaty. Meanwhile we make certain reservations. Any legislation which imposes disabilities on natives which are not imposed on Europeans will be reserved to the Secretary of State, and the Governor will not give his assent before receiving the Secretary of State’s decision. Legislation that will effect the alienation of native lands will also be reserved. It is customary to make some provision in money for native interests, such as education, by reserving a certain sum for administration by the High Commissioner or some other political or Imperial official. We propose to reserve Swaziland to the direct administration of the High Commissioner, with the limiting provision that no settlement he may make is to be less advantageous to the natives than the existing arrangement.

Creationism vs. Evolution

Mr. James Mason asks us to verify whether or not Churchill ever said or wrote: “You create your own Universe as you go along.” Yes. Here is the surrounding text, from My Early Life (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1930), 130-31. Some paragraph breaks are added, and we include many of the foregoing lines because Churchill is dealing forthrightly and sensibly with an issue that still rages today: creation vs. evolution. Puzzled? Read Churchill:

...I have always been surprised to see some of our Bishops and clergy making such heavy weather about reconciling the Bible story with modern scientific and historical knowledge. Why do they want to reconcile them? If you are the recipient of a message which cheers your heart and fortifies your soul, which promises you reunion with those you have loved in a world of larger opportunity and wider sympathies, why should you worry about the shape or colour of the travel-stained envelope; whether it is duly stamped, whether the date on the postmark is right or wrong? These matters may be puzzling, but they are certainly not important. What is important is the message and the benefits to you of receiving it. Close reasoning can conduct one to the precise conclusion that miracles are impossible: that “it is much more likely that human testimony should err, than that the laws of nature should be violated”; and at the same time one may rejoice to read how Christ turned the water into wine in Cana of Galilee or walked on the lake or rose from the dead. The human brain cannot comprehend infinity, but the discovery of mathematics enables it to be handled quite easily. The idea that nothing is true except what we comprehend is silly, and that ideas which our minds cannot reconcile are mutually destructive, sillier still. Certainly nothing could be more repulsive both to our minds and feelings than the spectacle of thousands or millions of universes—for that is what they say it comes to now—all knocking about together for ever without any rational or good purpose behind them. I therefore adopted quite early in life a system of believing whatever I wanted to believe, while at the same time leaving reason to pursue unfettered whatever paths she was capable of treading.

Some of my cousins who had the great advantage of University education used to tease me with arguments to prove that nothing has any existence except what we think of it. The whole creation is but a dream; all phenomena are imaginary. You create your own universe as you go along. The stronger your imagination, the more variegated your universe. When you leave off dreaming, the universe ceases to exist. These amusing mental acrobatics are all right to play with. They are perfectly harmless and perfectly useless. I warn my younger readers only to treat them as a game. The metaphysicians will have the last word and defy you to disprove their absurd propositions.

Wit & Wisdom

My Early Life
Winston was counting the days until the school term ended and he regained his freedom. On 2 July he wrote his mother: “It was so kind of you to let Everest come down here. I think she enjoyed her-self very much. Only 18 more days. Now I will say goodbye. With love & Kisses I remain, Your affect. Winston”

When school was out, Jennie took both her sons for a visit to Blenheim Palace. Lord Randolph’s father had died in July 1883 and Randolph and his brother Blandford, the new Duke of Marlborough, were touring Europe at the time. Jennie left Winston and Jack there alone with their twelve-year-old cousin Sunny. Randolph wrote to express concern: “I think it is rather rash of you letting him be at Blenheim without you. I don’t know who will look after him & Sunny & keep them in order.”

Winston appears to have kept in order. On 15 September he wrote his mother: “I hope you are quite well. I went out fishing today & caught my first fish by my self. Jack & I are quite well. With love & kisses. I am your loving Winston.”

Sir Martin Gilbert’s official biography tracks the politics and romance as Churchill pursued his courtship of Clementine Hozier. On 4 August he spoke to the International Free Trade Congress at Caxton Hall, Westminster, attacking those who looked upon trade as a kind of warfare:

How absurd it is continuously to employ the language of war and the metaphors of war in relation to the peaceful transactions of mankind! Whereas in war both parties lose, whoever wins, in commerce out of every peaceful transaction there is an advantage for both parties...Every exchange that takes place between nations renders another exchange possible in consequence of it. Multiply exchanges and you multiply good will. Increase good will and you increase national security.

But Churchill was less than prescient in predicting “the peaceful development of European politics in the next twenty years” because of “the prosaic bonds of commerce,” which “impose an effective caution and restraint even upon the most reckless and the most intemperate of statesmen.”

On 7 August, Winston’s brother Jack was married and WSC wrote two long letters to Clementine, betraying both his eagerness to see her (“I shall go over to Blenheim quite early on Monday, & mind you come by the first possible train.”) as well as his disappointment at not hearing from her. The catastrophe to which he referred was a fire which destroyed the country house where he had been a guest:

You have not distinguished yourself very much as a correspondent....But I suppose you were waiting for me—& I was hampered & Hindered by Cruel Catastrophe. Alack!...you will be amused at Blenheim. It has many glories in the fullness of summer. Pools of water, gardens of roses, a noble lake shrouded by giant trees; tapestries, pictures & monuments within....Till Monday then & may the Fates play fair.

Clementine replied the same day:

My dearest—I hope you have slept like a stone....from 1 onwards I slept the sleep of the just & this morning am fresh & fit. Tell me how you feel & whether you mean to get up for breakfast. The purpose of this letter is also to send you heaps of love and four kisses. XXXX. from Your always devoted Winston.

Clementine promptly replied:

My dearest—I never slept so well & I had the most heavenly dreams. I am coming down presently—Mother is quite worn out as we have been talking for the last two hours. Je t’aime passionnément—I feel less shy in French.”
Moving on to Salisbury Hall to visit Churchill’s mother did not stop their exchange of notes:

My beloved—Get up! I want so much to see you. Let us go for a walk before lunch. I slept till 10.30! Several interesting letters have arrived which I will show you. The sun shines bright, & my heart thobs to see you again—sweet—precious. Your devoted W.

Clementine’s reply: “Darling—I am surrounded by millions of letters which I am trying to answer. I will be down in about an hour or a little more. I love you. Clementine”

A day later, at Albert Hall in Swansea, Churchill gave a speech on foreign policy in which he deprecated war between Great Britain and Germany is inevitable. It is all nonsense….People say, “Oh, it would be worth our while to fight for the sake of the trade.” Gentlemen, it is not worth fighting for the sake of trade. One month of fighting would destroy more wealth than successful trading of five years could produce, even if everybody worked twelve hours a day….that far and wide throughout the masses of the British democracy there is no feeling of ill-will whatever towards Germany…. We wish them well from the bottom of our hearts...

Winston and Clementine were married on 12 September 1908 at 2pm and, as WSC would write in his autobiography thirty-two years later, he “lived happily ever afterwards.” That Churchill fell in love with a woman as beautiful and brilliant as Clementine is no surprise. That he was able to win her love after an inauspicious debut is a testament to the observation of his first love, Pamela Plowden: “The first time you meet Winston you see all his faults, and the rest of your life you spend in discovering his virtues.”

75 YEARS AGO:
Spring 1933 • Age 58
“Britain’s hour of weakness is Europe’s hour of danger...”

The Nazi Party’s consolidation was as swift as it was astonishing. On 15 July, it was established as the sole legal political party in Germany, and evidence was already emerging that the German government had begun to build military aircraft, in violation of the Versailles Treaty. Churchill addressed these ominous developments on 12 August, 1933:

Nobody can watch the events which are taking place in Germany without increasing anxiety about what their outcome will be….Already her smaller neighbours, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, and Denmark, feel a deep disquietude. There is a grave reason to believe that Germany is arming herself, or seeking to arm herself, contrary to the solemn treaties exacted from her in her hour of defeat….I trust [we] will be strong enough to enable us to count for something when we work for peace, and strong enough if war should come in Europe to maintain our effective neutrality, unless we should decide of our own free will to the contrary. Always remember that Britain’s hour of weakness is Europe’s hour of danger.

Churchill’s warnings were confirmed in a letter in early September from Duff Cooper, on holiday in Austria:

We are living here on the frontier of Austria and the inhabitants are nervous of invasion. We motored through the centre of Germany and it was a remarkable sight. Everywhere and at all times of the day and night there were troops marching, drilling and singing. Hitlerite uniform is an exceptionally unpleasant shade of khaki and one sees as much of it in Germany now as one did of khaki in England, in 1918. This is not an exaggeration. They are preparing for war with more general enthusiasm than a whole nation has ever before put into such preparation. Meanwhile I read in the “Times” that a special meeting of our Cabinet has been discussing disarmament.

During the summer, Churchill also was putting the final touches on the initial volume of Marlborough, an endeavor far better received than his controversial political views. His friend Lady Violet Bonham Carter thanked him in June for the hours of absorbed interest & tense excitement your “Marlborough” has brought me. From start to finish it was a draught of pure delight. The current is throughout swift & strong. Never for one moment was I becalmed in sluggish waters.

Duff Cooper passed on similar praise:

I have read every word of your first volume with great delight. It is a remarkable performance. You make the man live—and the period. The reader is caught up in the passions of the times and feels that the author has almost played his part in them.

On 25 July, five days after signing a Concordat with the Pope in which the Catholic Church agreed to refrain from any political activity in Germany, the Nazis passed a law providing for the compulsory sterilization of all people who were blind, deaf, deformed or mentally deficient. It was a law taken virtually word for word from model state legislation provided by U.S. eugenics lobbyists on which laws in twenty-six American states were already based, and gave new meaning to the phrase “Made in USA.”
He was tall, dark, slender and a little over-dressed. His eyes and hair were lustrous; the first from nature, the second from too much oil. His mouth had always a slightly contemptuous droop, his voice was a beautiful drawl. He had acquired, not diligently but with too much ease, the airs of a fox-hunting man who could swear elegantly in Greek. Many people loved him, most distrusted him, some despised him, and he despised almost everybody. In his later career as Earl of Birkenhead he served himself more faithfully than his God or his country, and has been left naked to his biographers; who, when they come to dealing with him, will discover among other less creditable attributes that he was without question the most fascinating creature of his times.¹

So wrote the historian George Dangerfield in 1935, only five years after the death of his subject, Frederick Edwin Smith, First Earl of Birkenhead, invariably referred to by those who knew him as “F.E.” One who knew him personally remembered him as possessing the “most powerful mind with which I had ever been brought in contact.”²

This was said by Sir John Masterman, the respected Oxford historian best known for directing counter-espionage activity in Britain during the Second World War, and a man who knew his fair share of geniuses. Asked late in life if he really meant what he said, “Masterman replied impatiently that he did not write what he did not mean.”³

Across the political spectrum, Clement Attlee remarked that he would “rather hear [F.E.] make a speech in the House than anybody.” The former Labour Prime Minister described Birkenhead as possessed of both a “brilliant mind” and “bags of guts.” He believed the “Tories should have made him [their] leader in the 20s” as he was one of the few Conservative politicians “who understood the working man.”⁴

Yet for all of this high praise, F.E. Smith is best remembered today, if at all, for having been Winston Churchill’s best friend. Partly this reflects Churchill’s continuing popularity and Smith’s own early demise, but partly it is the result of a steady—even dramatic—decline of interest in political history. Interest in things Churchill is by no means a poor portal through which to enter the
field of “F.E. Studies.” No more dynamic friendship is to be found in British history.

EARLY YEARS

F.E. Smith was born on 12 July 1872 in Birkenhead, England, an industrial suburb of Liverpool, the second and eldest son among seven children born to Frederick and Elizabeth Smith. His father was a local councillor and solicitor, but the family fortunes stemmed from a firm of estate agents founded by his grandfather. Not unlike many politicians, the adult F.E. fostered the deception that he came from humble beginnings. In truth he was raised in upper-middle-class affluence.

Sadly, the Smith family seemed to have been doomed to short life-spans. At sixteen, F.E. became his family’s senior male when his father died at forty-two. This, however, was not before Frederick Smith had instilled in his son the ambition to become the Lord Chancellor of England. His mother fueled her son’s developing sense of self-importance. According to her grandson, Elizabeth Smith had an “almost Oriental sense of priority for the dominant male.” She and her daughters deferred to and waited upon F.E. and his two brothers to an extent which would shock the modern mind and, not surprisingly, produce in F.E. a staunch male chauvinist stridently opposed to women’s suffrage. Yet, by all accounts, his mother “was the one person of whom he was [and always remained] in awe.”

At Oxford, F.E. was a brilliant scholar, but he had received his entire early education at nondescript schools in the Liverpool area. In 1886 he failed the entrance exam for Harrow, whose headmaster, Dr. Welldon would accept Winston Churchill on slender evidence of qualifications two years later. F.E. did not take failure lightly. As Lord Chancellor in 1919, thirty-three years later, he found himself seated across a dinner table from Dr. Welldon and took the opportunity to sneer at his lack of perspicacity. “It was rather my failure,” the aged Welldon politely replied.

While attending Liverpool University in 1891, F.E. gained a scholarship to Wadham College, Oxford, where he distinguished himself as President of the Union, earned a First in Jurisprudence and secured the Vinerian Law Scholarship. Elected a Fellow of Merton College, he served a three-year appointment as Lecturer in Law.

INTO POLITICS

With the start of the Edwardian era, F.E. left Oxford to make his way towards fame and fortune as a Liverpool-based barrister. His world-view had been formed in late-Victorian Liverpool, as Churchill wrote: Smith “had reached settled and somewhat somber conclusions upon a large number of questions, about which many people are content to remain in placid suspense.”

Liverpool in F.E.’s time functioned as a virtual colony of Belfast. Masses of working-class Ulster Protestants, who had crossed the Irish Sea to fill the need for industrial labor, had organized themselves into the Liverpool Workingman’s Conservative Association (LWMCA) and had defined local politics. Believing passionately in the Union, the Empire and the Church of England, they opposed Irish Home Rule, and made no secret of their anti-Catholic bias. With almost equal bitterness, they distrusted efforts by the Liberal Party and religious Nonconformists to restrict the drink trade. F.E. became their articulate spokesman. Yet he also possessed a strong libertarian instinct, as when he summed up his efforts to stop restrictions on the sale of alcohol with the words: “Better England free than England sober.”

Away from politics, F.E. established both a family and a successful legal career. In April 1901 he married Margaret Furneaux, the daughter of an Oxford don. They made a good if not always faithful couple and together had a son and two daughters. At the Bar F.E. became one of the best known and most highly-paid barristers in the country, making over £10,000 per year before the war. He “took silk” as a King’s Counsel (KC) in 1908.

When Joseph Chamberlain launched his Tariff Reform campaign in 1903 in the belief that protective tariffs could preserve the Empire, F.E. became an ardent supporter. Defying the national trend, he won his seat in Parliament as a Conservative MP for Walton (essentially Liverpool East) against the Liberal tide in 1906, and sought to make an immediate splash and fire up a dispirited Opposition.

In his maiden speech his formidable forensic skills, developed at the Oxford Union and polished before the Bar, alternated with his legendary sarcasm and quick wit as he ripped into the Liberal Government, laying debating traps into which his opponents walked with child-like innocence. According to Violet Bonham-Carter, who witnessed the entire speech from the gallery, members of the House shouted and roared with ecstasy. Only towards the end did Winston Churchill enter the chamber to catch the last of Smith’s bravura performance.

CHURCHILL

Two years younger than F.E., Churchill had been a Conservative, but his support for Free Trade caused him to switch parties in 1904, leading to his appointment as an Under Secretary in the new Liberal government. Some months after F.E.’s maiden speech a mutual acquaintance introduced them. “From that hour,” Churchill recalled, “our friendship was perfect….It grew stronger as nearly a quarter of a century slipped by and it lasted till his untimely death.”

The friendship between Churchill and F.E. Smith was not only the strongest that Churchill ever had, but >>
F.E. SMITH...
virtually his only one based on a shared sense of equality. With Lloyd George, Churchill always felt the inferior, just as he occupied the superior role in his association with Brendan Bracken. With Max Beaverbrook there was always a certain friction, with Roosevelt there was a clear distance. But Winston and F.E. could share all their thoughts and wisdom, with the knowledge that each would receive a valuable experience. Churchill's private secretary Sir John Colville recalled that “several times during the Second World War, when storms were threatening,” the Prime Minister “told me how much he missed F.E.’s wise counsel.”

Clementine Churchill thought differently. Although good friends with Margaret Smith, she believed F.E. encouraged her husband’s worst habits, particularly gambling and drinking. She grouped Birkenhead with Beaverbrook and Bracken as the “Terrible Bs.” But during the lowest ebb in her husband’s life, following the failed Dardanelles Campaign in 1915, when F.E. nearly alone sought to sustain Churchill with visits, letters, gifts and encouragement, Clementine recognized the value of “a true and faithful friend.” That fierce loyalty was part of what Churchill had in mind when he described F.E. as possessing “all the canine virtues.” Nevertheless, F.E. could never be classified as Churchill’s poodle.

Mutual talent and similarity of temperament explains their immediate attraction, because on the political issues F.E. and Churchill nearly always disagreed. They were mostly in opposing parties. When Churchill was Home Secretary in 1910, F.E. criticized him, contrary to popular mythology, for not using troops to quell striking Welsh miners at Tonypandy. Smith opposed the Liberals’ “People’s Budget” of 1909, though both men thought it madness for the Lords to reject it. F.E. was among the diehards opposing the 1911 Parliament Bill, which stemmed from the budget crisis—not because he favored the privileges of hereditary peerages but because he believed the composition of the Lords required reform: he favored a largely appointed assembly. What F.E. did not support was a restriction on the powers of the upper chamber. He feared the tyranny that could result from an unchecked, essentially unicameral legislature. Many today would not argue with that reasoning.

THE OTHER CLUB
Against the background of political antagonism, F.E. and Churchill organized the now-legendary Other Club. According to unverifiable tradition, the impetus for the formation of the group came when both men were simultaneously blackballed from joining the exclusive dining circle known as The Club, which traced its pedigree back to Dr. Samuel Johnson and his cronies in 1764. While neither ever cared for much for the traditional world of formal gentlemen’s clubs, both enjoyed stimulating talk around the dinner table.

Membership in The Other Club, when founded in the summer of 1911, was by invitation only, the principal criteria being personality and conversational skills. The forty-one charter members included Lloyd George, Lord Kitchener, the actor Beerbohm Tree, Churchill’s beloved cousin Sunny (Ninth Duke of Marlborough), The Observer editor J.L. Garvin, the Portuguese ambassador, and the King’s secretaries.

Meetings were to take place at the Savoy Hotel at 8:15 pm on alternate Thursdays when Parliament was in session. In practice, though, meetings did not take place so regularly, and more than once The Other Club went into abeyance for extended periods—such as the 1914 Home Rule Crisis, which stretched political friendship to the limit. Still, The Other Club survived thanks to its founders, whose twin spirits infused the celebrated rules they established including the famous Rule 12: “Nothing in the rules or intercourse of the Club shall interfere with the rancour or asperity of party politics.”

Extending an invitation to join The Other Club became for Churchill something like an honour in the personal purview of the Sovereign: it was his highest accolade. Still, The Other Club’s original criteria had to be met by each potential invitee. Much as he admired Clement Attlee’s abilities, for example, Churchill did not think his Labour counterpart met Other Club standards.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR
The 1914-18 war altered the career paths of Smith and Churchill. Asquith had to reorganize his Liberal government as a coalition with the Tories, following the initial failure of the Dardanelles campaign in May 1915; Churchill was made scapegoat and demoted from First Lord of the Admiralty to Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. By contrast, as a leading Conservative, F.E. was appointed Solicitor General and, by tradition, was knighted to become Sir Frederick Smith KC MP.

Only a few months later, when Churchill left the government to serve in the trenches on the Western Front, F.E. was promoted again, to Attorney General with a seat in the Cabinet. This position he retained when Lloyd George replaced Asquith in 1916, and continued to hold for the duration of the war. While Churchill served his exile on the Western Front F.E. made visits and sent him letters and gifts. (Briefly serving in France himself early in the war, F.E. had learned that boxes of cigars sent as gifts from his wife tended to be stolen. He directed Margaret to wrap the boxes in plain paper and affix to them specially made labels reading “Army Temperance Society Publication Series 9.”)
F.E. by Himself
Birkenhead’s Best Ripostes

Judge Willis: “Mr Smith, have you ever heard of a saying by Bacon—the great Bacon—that youth and discretion are ill-wedded companions?”
F.E.: “Yes, I have. And have you ever heard of a saying of Bacon—the great Bacon—that a much-talking judge is like an ill-tuned cymbal?”
Judge Willis: “You are extremely offensive, young man.”
F.E.: “As a matter of fact, we both are; but I am trying to be, and you can’t help it.”
Judge Willis: “What do you suppose I am on the Bench for, Mr. Smith?”
F.E. “It is not for me, your honour, to attempt to fathom the inscrutable workings of Providence.” *

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[F.E. told a heckler on a campaign stump that he should remove his cap when putting a question.]
Heckler: “I’ll take off my boots if you like.”
F.E.: “Ah, I knew you’d come here to be unpleasant.” *

*****
F.E. (addressing his constituency): “And now I shall tell you exactly what the Government has done for all of you.”
Woman in the gallery: “Nothing!”
F.E.: “My dear lady, the light in this hall is so dim as to prevent a clear sight of your undoubted charms, so that I am unable to say with certainty whether you are a virgin, a widow, or a matron, but in any case I will guarantee to prove that you are wrong. If you are a virgin flapper, we have given you the vote; if you are a wife, we have increased employment and reduced the cost of living; if you are a widow, we have given you a pension—and if you are none of these, but are foolish enough to be a tea drinker, we have reduced the tax on sugar.” *

*****
High Court judge presiding in a sodomy case: “Could you tell me what do you think one ought to give a man who allows himself to be buggered?”
F.E.: “Oh, thirty shillings or two pounds; whatever you happen to have on you.” **

*****
Lady Astor: “If I were married to you, I’d put poison in your coffee.”
F.E. “I were married to you, I’d drink it.” ***

*****
F.E: “Winston is a man of simple tastes—he is quite easily satisfied with the best of everything.” ***

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First published 1937.


*** Richard M. Langworth, Churchill by Himself, London: Ebury Press, New York: Public Affairs, 2008, 532, 579. (WSC and F.E. were so closely linked that two of Churchill’s most famous alleged quotes are reliably thought to have originated with his friend, who was very quick off the cuff, as these examples suggest.)
F.E. SMITH...
On one memorable occasion in 1916, F.E. toured the front and stopped to see his friend at Churchill’s “Plugstreet” headquarters. A vindictive staff officer who cared for neither man gave orders for the Attorney General to be arrested. This event triggered volcanic fulminations from both F.E. and Churchill, though both were able to laugh it off the next day at Gen. Haig’s headquarters, with the aid of copious amounts of brandy.

THE CASEMENT TRIAL
The First World War also provided the setting for the most famous case which F.E. ever litigated. As Attorney General he personally assumed the role of lead prosecutor in the 1916 trial of Sir Roger Casement. The charge was treason and the evidence indisputable. Casement, a Protestant Ulsterman, had been knighted for his humanitarian efforts as a Foreign Office diplomat in Latin America, but had morphed into an Irish-Catholic Nationalist who openly sought German assistance for his cause during the war.

Apprehended by the British, Casement intended to plead guilty and embrace martyrdom, but his lawyer convinced him to fight the charge. Fearing the arousal of trouble both in Ireland and among Irish-Americans, the British sought to neutralize sympathy for Casement, whose conviction was never in doubt. Ironically, the defendant himself provided the very means to accomplish this: Casement kept a diary detailing homosexual liaisons, including a fetish for boys. Irish Nationalists later claimed Casement was a eunuch to defame the putative author. Neither charge is true. During the trial, F.E. showed the diary quite properly to no one other than Casement’s attorney and the Attorney General for Ireland.

Five years later, during the Anglo-Irish Treaty negotiations, Sinn Fein representatives Michael Collins and Eamonn Duggan requested to see the diary by special appointment at the House of Lords and F.E., by then Lord Chancellor, made the necessary arrangements. According to Duggan, Collins verified the handwriting and pronounced the diary both genuine and “disgusting.” Casement was executed in August 1915, but his remains were eventually returned to Ireland for a state funeral in 1965.

LORD CHANCELLOR
By the summer of 1917, Prime Minister Lloyd George felt secure enough politically to bring Churchill back into the Government as Minister of Munitions. F.E. and Churchill thus became Cabinet colleagues for the first time, and remained as such for nine of the following eleven years.

Following the Armistice and victory of the Coalition government in the general election of 1918, F.E. considered a return to private practice. Lloyd George, determined not to lose so valuable an asset (or see him become a potential adversary), seduced him with an offer of elevation to the Woolsack.* At 46 Sir Frederick Smith became the First Baron Birkenhead and the youngest Lord Chancellor in modern times.

F.E. could not resist this very desirable political plum, but he did sacrifice his chances of leading the Tories as prime minister, as well as his future earnings potential at the Bar. In compensation he received a salary twice that of the prime minister and successive promotions in the peerage to viscount and earl.

Not all approved of the appointment. The Spectator saw the insidious influence of Churchill, whom the journal fancied to be pulling the strings of a puppet prime minister. For his part, F.E. is supposed to have remarked: “Should I be drunk as a lord or sober as a judge?”

In fact F.E. became one of the most successful of England’s Lords Chancellors. The job entailed many responsibilities, legislative, executive and judicial. At 46 he could bring more energy to these tasks than his often elderly predecessors. Churchill judged his friend “more at home in the House of Lords, and more dominating upon that assembly than ever in the Lower Chamber.” Although he disliked the fancy dress and the long hours, F.E. took his job seriously.

When it came to the business of appointing judges, he did not forget his own experiences facing supercilious men on the bench (see sidebar). As Lord Chancellor he curtly dismissed the application of one would-be judge with the remark, “he is a pompous little ass.” In legislative matters he unsuccessfully but passionately championed a reform of the divorce laws, which he judged favored the wealthy few. In this debate he delivered what his son later judged to be the greatest speech of his life. Sexist and racist by the standards of today, F.E. believed nevertheless in equality before the law.

But it was in Cabinet that F.E. was at his strongest. Churchill thought it so and others agreed with the description WSC penned of his friend in this setting: “He had acquired in the legal profession the habit of listening mute and motionless hour after hour, and he rarely spoke until his counsel was sought. Then his manner was so quiet, so reasonable, so matter-of-fact and sensible, that you could feel opinion being changed.”

*A seat in the House of Lords stuffed with wool from several Commonwealth countries, and remindful of England’s traditional source of wealth. Thought to date back to King Edward III (1327-77), it was the seat of the Lord Chancellor until July 2006, when it became the seat of the Lord Speaker, whose duties were split from those of the Lord Chancellor.
IRELAND

“Looking back,” Churchill wrote in his book *Great Contemporaries*, “I think that the post-war years of the Coalition must be regarded as the great period of F.E.’s life. And there was nothing in it that became him more than the part he played in the final settlement of the difficult and dangerous Irish controversy that had distorted English politics for over thirty years.”21

His part in drafting the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty was F.E.’s proudest accomplishment and the centerpiece of his political career. In a sense he had to be part of the solution because he’d been part of the problem: the refusal of Ulster Protestants to submit to Irish Home Rule. Yet “Orange Smith,” as some called him, saw further than most through the darkest issue in British politics. He concurred with the Jeffersonian view that governments derived their just powers from the consent of the governed. The Catholic majority of Southern Ireland, he believed, should no more be permitted to impose its authority upon the Protestant North than Britain was entitled to continue ruling a resistant South. Thus, from the first F.E. was prepared to accept the geographically untidy solution of partition.

The postwar political landscape in Ireland made finding a solution more treacherous than ever, what with the terrorist activities of the IRA and the equally vicious counter-actions of the British military police, the “Black & Tans.” As Secretary of State for War in 1919, Churchill was seen by many in Ireland to be the minister responsible for the latter outrages. Churchill supported Irish self-government and played a significant role in the treaty negotiations. But the leading government men in the Irish talks were Prime Minister Lloyd George, the Conservative leader Austen Chamberlain, and Lord Birkenhead.

Perhaps the key moment came when Chamberlain and Birkenhead simultaneously accepted Dominion status for Southern Ireland. The challenge then shifted to convincing the Sinn Fein representatives, Michael Collins, Eamonn Duggan and Arthur Griffith, that Dominion status less Ulster was the most they could expect to get from Britain at that time.

F.E. established a rapport with Collins which, along with Chamberlain’s rapport with Griffith, and above all Lloyd George’s formidable powers of persuasion (perhaps deception)—produced a treaty that, for Britain at least, settled the seemingly impossible issue for fifty years.

Birkenhead knew that Unionist die-hards would never forgive him. In putting his name to the treaty he remarked to Collins that he may have signed his political death-warrant. Collins, accurately as it turned out, >>
**F.E. SMITH...**

replied that he had probably signed his actual death warrant.

**WILDERNESS YEARS**

By autumn 1922, F.E. was fifty and exhausted. Heavy work and drink had begun to take their toll. For a time he experienced vision trouble, which prevented him from being able to read. His staff could read to him most paper work, but it was probably Churchill who kept him informed about matters restricted to the Cabinet. He made himself anathema to his party by sneering and insulting those Tories who wished to withdraw from the Coalition and unseat Lloyd George. Margot Asquith pithily remarked: “Lord Birkenhead’s brains appear to have gone to his head.”

From October 1922, F.E. and Churchill found themselves out of government for about two years, and Labour replaced the Liberal Party as the primary opposition to the Conservatives. F.E. and Churchill, however, both made the mistake of taking seriously the socialist rhetoric of Labour, believing they must keep a Marxist menace from power. Neither saw that the British working class sought only an improved standard of living within the context of a capitalist economy, regulated but not controlled by government.

Tory Democracy, that illusory concept of Lord Randolph Churchill, hero alike to his son and F.E., had been buried, but Liberal support of the first Labour government cleared the way for Churchill to rejoin the Conservatives. Meanwhile, F.E.’s backing for the Tories in the successive general elections of 1923 and 1924 enabled his own return to government under the leadership of Stanley Baldwin.

**INDIA**

The India Office of the 1920s seemed respectable for a former Lord Chancellor. F.E. did not really desire a return to the demands of the Woolsack; nor did Baldwin, who allegedly suggested it would be inappropriate to see the Lord Chancellor drunk on the street. But Baldwin did want the unity that Churchill and F.E. would bring. As a duo they were potentially too dangerous to leave out.

For F.E. the India Office had the advantage of not being too taxing. The real work was done by the Viceroy in Delhi. This left the Secretary of State in London to do little more than act as a liaison with the Cabinet. One of F.E’s secretaries during these years recalled a half century later that they seem to have spent rather a lot of time playing golf. Churchill, by contrast, as Chancellor of the Exchequer was busier than ever.

Birkenhead and Churchill shared the view that Britain provided an enlightened and benevolent rule which Indians could not presently establish on their own.

Both, therefore, opposed any movement towards Indian Home Rule, and both were wrong in believing that they or anyone could do anything to prevent it. Where the force of nationalism is at work, rational argument holds no power. Following their Irish experience, both men should have understood this, but notions of race and imperial identity clouded their judgment.

To their credit, both held British government in India accountable to the rule of law. One of Churchill’s most effective speeches in Parliament had been his defense of the Coalition government’s condemnation of Gen. Dyer for his part in the 1919 Amritsar massacre: “Frightfulness is not a remedy known to the British pharmacopoeia....” As Lord Chancellor, Birkenhead delivered an equally potent speech in the Lords that echoed Churchill’s views, in the face of a more conservative and more hostile chamber.

By the autumn of 1928, however, F.E. was a spent force. In fast-declining health, heavily indebted from a lifelong habit of good living, he resigned from the government, hoping to try to make some money.
ALCOHOL

Birkenhead’s drinking stood out even at a time when high consumption was commonplace. Yet he had no drinking problem before the war. Indeed, opposition to restrictions on the sale of alcohol made him popular with the working men of his constituency. During a wartime visit to the United States, he was appalled by the ominous signs of encroaching Prohibition.

But after the war, his drinking was increasingly noticed. When seated at dinner one evening next to a pretentious woman who introduced herself as “Mrs. Porter-Porter with a hyphen,” F.E. replied that he was “Mr. Whisky-Whisky with a siphon.” In 1921, Lord Beaverbrook shrewdly wagered F.E. that he could not go the year without drink. Birkenhead took up the bet and for months held to the offer with gusto. Churchill sniffed at the ill effects of temperance upon his friend, but Leo Amery recognized F.E.’s improved performance, and credited sobriety for his success with the Irish Treaty.

An equally pronounced difference materialized after F.E. resumed drinking. When appendicitis prevented Churchill from campaigning during the election of 1922, his friend traveled to Dundee to give a speech in his place: an arch-Tory supporting a Liberal. “He was no use at all,” Clementine reported, “he was drunk.” Sadly, both F.E. and Churchill encouraged their sons to believe that alcohol consumption showed the measure of a man: Randolph Churchill died at an even younger age than his godfather, while Churchill’s godson, the Second Earl of Birkenhead, battled successfully to become a reformed alcoholic.

THE END

F.E. had always been an athletic man, fond of tennis, golf and horseback riding. Well into middle age he took pride in showing off his muscles. He was a natural to mentor the 1924 British Olympic team, and is ably played by Nigel Davenport in the great film, “Chariots of Fire.” (Incidentally, the role of the runner Lord Lindsay is played by Nigel Havers, a believable Randolph Churchill in “The Wilderness Years” starring Robert Hardy.)

Eventually, though, F.E. started to put on weight. As with Randolph Churchill, heavy drinking and smoking wore out every organ in his body simultaneously. By the late summer of 1930, only a year and a half into retirement, his system became so weakened that he succumbed to pneumonia on 30 September.

“Between the setting of the sun and night,” Churchill wrote, “there was only the briefest twilight. It was better so.” A month later, the largest attendance ever at The Other Club heard Winston Churchill break with Club precedent and eulogize his friend and co-founder. “Let us drink tonight in silence,” Churchill concluded, “to the memory of a dear and honoured friend whose like we shall never see again.”

ENDNOTES

3. Ibid.
5. Campbell, 16.
6. Ibid., 688.
7. Ibid., 18.
15. Ibid., 388.
16. Ibid., 421.
17. Ibid., 469.
21. Ibid., 114.
22. Campbell, 616.
23. Ibid., 257.
24. Ibid., 618.

FURTHER READING


*F.E.: The Life of F. E. Smith First Earl of Birkenhead*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1959. (A heavily revised edition of the above, with more on his political career and less on his legal career.)


Churchill’s relations with the British Army's generals are often reduced to colorful anecdotes. The PM, on a fraught evening at Chequers in the spring of 1941, threatening to put some of them in front of firing squads if they failed to hold Egypt against Rommel, is a celebrated one. While such episodes make good theater, they do no justice to how complex the relationship between political and military leaders really is, especially under the pressures of war.

A case study that I believe is very illuminating is entitled above, with a bow to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. It begins in the bleak winter following Munich, on Winston Churchill’s sixty-fourth birthday, at a dinner party given by Clementine Churchill’s cousin, Venetia Montague.

Lord Rothschild had asked Venetia to include in the party a young gunner officer, Captain Orde Wingate, who was home on leave from his current posting in Palestine, where the British were with difficulty containing an Arab revolt against both the Mandate authorities and the Jewish settler community. Lord Rothschild wanted Churchill to meet Wingate, a passionate supporter of Zionism, displaying the zeal common to converts to a cause.

Wingate had formed, and led with considerable success, small special operations units, which he christened “Special Night Squads,” made up of British officers and NCOs, with the rank and file drawn from the Jewish settlers. For perhaps ten minutes Wingate poured out to Churchill his belief in the future of Jews in Palestine, as well as his conviction that his approach to counterinsurgency was the answer to Arab irregulars.

Churchill needed no encouragement to support Zionist aspirations in Palestine. He had done so for years. Wingate’s burning intensity impressed him, as it did most who encountered the young officer. What Churchill made of Wingate’s counterinsurgency theories is unfortunately not on record.

When they next met nearly five years later, at Downing Street in August 1943, Churchill was Prime Minister and Minister of Defence. Wingate, still burningly intense, was a controversial acting brigadier. The PM was facing two major problems in Britain’s war against Japan; Wingate had come to offer him the solution to both.

Churchill’s problems were intertwined: the U.S.

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obsession with China, and the Indian Army’s poor showing to date against the Imperial Japanese Army. After his first wartime Anglo-American conference in Washington, Churchill had said that he could sum up what he had learned in one word: “China.” Roseate American assumptions about China, and Chiang Kai-shek’s regime, had led the Roosevelt administration to assume that China could be a major factor in the war, if its armies could only be properly organized and supplied. An acerbic Anglophobe, Lieutenant General Joseph Stillwell, was (in theory at least) to provide the organization, but proper supply required the opening of a land link to China via Burma.

The British failure to hold Burma in 1942 had severed that link, the famous Burma Road, forcing the Americans to mount an expensive trans-Himalayan airlift of limited capacity. The solution, the Americans reasoned, was clear: the British had to reconquer at least enough of north Burma to allow them to drive a new road from eastern India to tie into the old Burma Road. Of course, the inconvenience of the Imperial Japanese Army had to be dealt with. And here is where the Indian Army came in.

It is all too easy now to criticize America’s wartime fixation with China and to point out the naïveté of the strategy built on that fixation. But Churchill had to take seriously both the fixation and the flawed strategy it engendered. Alliance politics demanded an effort in north Burma, however abysmal the climate and terrain. Only the Indian Army could make that effort.

The prewar Indian Army was highly professional but lacking in modern equipment; in the fraught summer of 1940 it was committed to a breakneck, open-ended expansion program which inevitably eroded the quality of its personnel. Moreover, since 1939 it had trained exclusively for the Middle East theater. When Japan attacked, the Indian Army had, not surprisingly, fared poorly in Malaya and Burma. Then in the winter of 1942-43, it was committed to a premature offensive into Burma that was the result of the need to respond to American pressures.

The design of this offensive was based on the excessive optimism of the Commander-in-Chief, India, General Sir Archibald Wavell, who was catastrophically wrong about what he imagined to be Japanese weaknesses. The offensive was badly organized and commanded; the troops who conducted it were little better than raw recruits. Again the Indian Army was routed: a deep embarrassment to the Prime Minister.

Churchill may have retained from his early immersion in the institutional culture of the regular British Army its condescending view of the Indian Army and its officers: a second-rate force suitable for chasing tribesmen on the Northwest Frontier but not for much more. Or he may simply have been tired of the complications the Indian Army’s failures were causing with the Americans. In any case, by spring 1943 he had had enough. He had already decided to remove Wavell. Now, telling his chief staff officer, Lieutenant General Sir Hastings Ismay, that the Indian Army—indeed, the entire Raj—was, in one of his inimitable phrases, a “welter of lassitude and inefficiency,” he was ready to force radical change. At that moment, Wingate again came to his attention.

Wingate’s experience owed much to Wavell who, commanding in Palestine in the late 1930s, had supported his unorthodox counterinsurgency tactics against the Arab revolt; in 1940 as Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, Wavell had summoned him to lead irregulars in Italian-occupied Ethiopia; finally as Commander-in-Chief, India, Wavell had given him a chance to try out his “long range penetration” theories in Burma. Without the cloak of Wavell’s protection, Wingate—who delighted in outraging more orthodox soldiers—quickly imploded. Wavell’s successor in Palestine threw Wingate out; the army then pigeonholed him in a dead-end job until Wavell called him to Cairo.

Once Wavell left the Middle East, having been removed by Churchill in June 1941, Wingate was again marginalized. Depressed and over-using an anti-malarial drug, he attempted suicide. Wavell again rescued him by summoning him to India, but at the end of Wingate’s first long-range penetration into Burma, he emerged from the jungles to find Wavell again removed, yet again by Churchill. It ought to have been the end for Wingate; instead he stood on the verge of a spectacular success. To understand what happened, we must look briefly at his theories and how they had worked out in practice.

“Long Range Penetration” was simply the use of air supply and radio to provision and coordinate the action of raiding units, made up of regular soldiers operating deep in the enemy’s rear, disrupting his supply lines and unsettling his command-and-control arrangements. >>
Orde Wingate did not invent air supply, but he certainly used it in an imaginative way. His first attempt at practicing long range penetration, despite the courage and endurance shown by his men, was at most a very marginal success—he lost a third of his force and all his pack animals while doing slight harm to the Japanese. (Indeed, many of his officers thought their raid an expensive failure.) The survivors emerged from the jungle in 1943 just as the conventional offensive into Burma was collapsing, costing Wavell his job.

Wingate’s “Chindits” (the name came from their unit symbol, a mythological beast that guarded Burmese temples) had accomplished something that at least could be made to look like success. Public relations officers in Delhi, desperate for something positive, fell on the Chindits, who were made into an instant media sensation.

Without Wavell’s protection, however, Wingate needed a new patron quickly and saw an opportunity. His after-action report, drafted to maximize the Chindits’ accomplishments and lay the groundwork for more and larger ventures, was back-channeled to Leo Amery, the Secretary of State for India and Burma in Churchill’s cabinet, who had known Wingate before the war. Amery gave it to Churchill, and Wingate was quickly summoned home.

When Wingate and Churchill met over dinner at Downing Street that August evening, there was instant rapport. The PM admired courage, and even his bitterest enemies never denied that Orde Wingate had abundant courage. Churchill also was very willing to entertain unorthodox solutions to military problems (and had already imposed several in the course of the war).

Wingate had such a solution to the intractable problem of Burma: give him a vastly enlarged, long range penetration force, and he would retake Burma and perhaps much more. Churchill distrusted GHQ India and the Indian Army, sentiments Wingate shared with even greater intensity. Finally, the Prime Minister had to prove to the Americans (whom he was about to meet in Quebec for an Anglo-American summit christened “Quadrant”) that the British could and would fight the Imperial Japanese Army successfully in Burma, thus reopening the Burma Road.

How better to demonstrate this than by bringing with him to the Quebec conference this charismatic, frighteningly intense soldier who had already—at least according to the press release—used innovative tactics to beat the hitherto invincible Japanese in what everyone believed was their native habitat, the jungle?1

Wingate arrived from India a little known—and, by many of those who did know him, much disliked—lieutenant colonel and temporary brigadier. Swept off to Quebec in Churchill’s wake, he emerged an acting major general who had been promised a corps-sized “Special Force” plus a private line to Number Ten. The impressed Americans threw in a private air force. It was the most spectacular upheaval in command arrangements and force structure Churchill caused in the entire course of the war. In Cairo the year before, usually taken as WSC’s most dramatic intervention of this kind, he appointed two general officers, Harold Alexander and Bernard Montgomery, who came from the army mainstream (and Monty was the protégé of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Sir Alan Brooke). But now Churchill had embraced a controversial, deeply disliked and, many felt, quite unstable officer whose unorthodox ideas had yet to prove themselves conclusively. That proof could only come if Wingate and his Chindits retook Burma.

But that, of course, never happened. Wingate’s ideas were flawed in many respects. For one thing, the Imperial Japanese Army did not have Western-style supply lines to disrupt, and tended to ignore logistics generally. When Special Force launched itself into Burma in March 1944, Wingate’s ideas, so enchantingly laid out for Churchill, rapidly proved unworkable.

Wingate did not live to see this—he died in an airplane crash just after Operation Thursday (or Chindit II) began. He would have liked the sequel to Chindit II even less than his own failures. Burma was reconquered, and the Burma Road reopened for the Americans, in a brilliant campaign by the Fourteenth Army, overwhelmingly Indian, led by a “sepoy general” who it is doubtful Churchill had even heard of in August 1943: Bill Slim, the finest British army commander since Wellington.

So why did Churchill buy into Wingate’s ideas so completely? One explanation offered points to emotion overpowering reasoned analysis: military romanticism on

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1. The curious belief that the Japanese were natural jungle fighters can only be explained as a consequence of no one having looked at where the Japanese Army had trained and fought before 1941. One wonders, not for the first time, about intelligence analysis.
the Prime Minister's part, if you will.\(^2\)

The explanation that focuses on Churchill's taste for the brave and eccentric is, I think, more colorful than accurate. The British war effort was Eurocentric because Europe was where the greatest threat to Britain lay. Crucial to winning that war was the Grand Alliance—and of his partners in that alliance, it was the Americans Churchill was most concerned with, not only for the duration of the war but for their impact on Britain's future as a Great Power. The Russians he could do little about, and for that and many other reasons, he had to have the Americans on his side. Washington's China obsession he neither shared nor fully understood, but it was a fact with which he had to deal. And deal he did—most effectively.

The Wingate ploy did turn aside for a time American pressure over Burma. By the time the fallacy in long range penetration tactics was clear, China fever had somewhat abated in Washington. Whatever may be made of Wingate and his ideas—and most historians now regard him as a long and contentious footnote to the Burma campaign—Churchill scored a considerable success in alliance politics at Quebec. If the price of this success was to complicate vastly the life of the India Command, one suspects that would have bothered him very little.

Winston Churchill never forgot that there is a political purpose to war: the aim is not simply military victory, but a political result matching national interests. That is what he kept unvaryingly before his eyes. His success was, of course, mixed; but that is owed to the resource disparity between Britain and her Grand Alliance partners, not to any failure by Churchill to correlate military strategy with national policy.

Perhaps that is why, when he came to discuss this episode in his memoirs, his treatment was rather low-key. (Two of his “syndicate” of assistants, Lieutenant General Sir Henry Pownall and Denis Kelly, were also unenthusiastic about Wingate from bitter personal experience.) The Burma campaign, if operationally brilliant, had failed to meet Churchill's test that military victory must serve national interests, for victory in Burma was the prelude to the end of the Indian Empire.

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\(^2\) In fact there had been no time for careful analysis in early August 1943—Wingate's skill in evading the normal chain of command by using the backstairs saw to that. The official commentary on his report, limping well behind events, saw a real but minor role for long range penetration tactics. So too did Brooke, after talking with Wingate prior to the fateful dinner with Churchill.
was opening my boxes,” Churchill wrote in his war memoirs, “when the telephone at my bedside rang. It was the First Sea Lord [Admiral Sir Dudley Pound]. His voice sounded odd. He gave a sort of cough and gulp, and at first I could not hear quite clearly. ‘Prime Minister, I have to report to you that the Prince of Wales and the Repulse have both been sunk by the Japanese—we think by aircraft. [Vice Admiral] Tom Phillips is drowned.’ ‘Are you sure it’s true?’ ‘There is no doubt at all.’ So I put the telephone down. I was thankful to be alone. In all the war I never received a more direct shock. The reader of these pages will realise how many efforts, hopes, and plans foundered with these two ships. As I turned over and twisted in bed the full horror of the news sank in upon me. There were no British or American capital ships in the Indian Ocean or the Pacific except the American survivors of Pearl Harbour, who were hastening back to California. Over all this vast expanse of waters Japan was supreme, and we everywhere were weak and naked.”

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Prince of Wales and Repulse: Churchill’s “Veiled Threat” Reconsidered

BARRY GOUGH
No tragedy is so poignant in British naval history as the loss of these two capital ships and so many aboard them. They had been, Churchill wrote, the only weapon in British hands, meaning a weapon of deterrence. The command of every ocean had been lost except the Atlantic. Australia and New Zealand were open to attack.

Prince of Wales and Repulse had been sent to Singapore, he wrote, “to exercise that kind of vague menace which capital ships of the highest quality whose whereabouts is unknown can impose upon all hostile naval calculations. How should we use them now? Obviously they must go to sea and vanish among the innumerable islands. There was general agreement on that.” Churchill had thought they might sail across the Pacific to join the U.S. fleet, “a proud gesture at this moment,” knitting the English-speaking world together. The existence of such a fleet would be the best possible shield for the Pacific Dominions. “But as the hour was late we decided to sleep on it, and settle the next morning what to do with the Prince of Wales and Repulse.”

These were Churchill’s undoubted intentions. What is not so sure is the decision-making process that led to the ships’ deployment: Admiral Phillips’s “Force Z.” Churchill’s part in these matters has been a subject of debate among some of the best historians, including Arthur Marder, Stephen Roskill, Correlli Barnett, Christopher Bell, Martin Middlebrook and Patrick Mahoney. Most recently, a succinct history of these events was provided by Arthur Nicolson in Hostages to Fortune (Reviewed in FH 133:38, with subsequent debate by Messrs. Courts and Kimball, FH 136:4-5).

Even if we understand the decision-making process, nagging questions remain: What went wrong? Why did Tom Phillips ignore the air threat to his fleet? Why did he leave Singapore and go north at all, given the immense Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) strength in ships and aircraft? Why did he maintain wireless telegraphy silence after Force Z had left Singapore?
PRINCE OF WALES AND REPULSE...

Force Z, created by the Defence Committee (Operations) of the British War Cabinet on 20 October 1941 and confirmed a month later, was a capital ship force consisting of HMS Prince of Wales (commissioned that year, in action against the Bismarck, and Churchill’s stout conveyance to meet Roosevelt at Argentia for the Atlantic Charter meeting); and the thrice-refurbished battlecruiser HMS Repulse, screened by four destroyers but no aircraft carrier (none was available; see below), to be dispatched forthwith to Singapore.

Its purpose was to deter Japan from entering the war or delay the outbreak of hostilities. The deployment was made for political reasons. Churchill contended that just as Tirpitz, Bismarck’s sister ship, had held down British naval units, so too these capital ships might deter the Japanese. On 4 November Churchill wrote to Stalin: “With the object of keeping Japan quiet we are sending our latest battleship, Prince of Wales, which can catch and kill any Japanese ship, into the Indian Ocean, and we are building up a powerful battle squadron there.”

Force Z arrived at Singapore on 2 December, but by then the international situation was deteriorating. On the 8th, Singapore time, Japanese troops swarmed ashore in Thailand and northern Malaya. Hong Kong, reinforced by two Canadian regiments, was under siege. Indo-China was overrun and the IJN occupied Saigon, with its handsome airbases so well suited for land-based naval aviation and coastal reconnaissance and operations.

Prince of Wales was one of five intended King George V class of battleships, displacing 35,000 tons, with ten 14-inch guns, and making over 30 knots. Jane’s Fighting Ships, 1940 stated that her “design will include enhanced defence against air attack, including an improved distribution of deck and side armour, more elaborate subdivision, and an improved system of underwater protection. Unofficial reports give weight of armour as over 14,000 tons, and water-line thickness as 16 inches.” She carried a complement of 1500.

By contrast, Repulse was a super-battlecruiser: displacement 32,000 tons, best speed 29 knots, with six 15-inch guns and secondary armament. She had a belt that gave additional protection about nine feet deep. These were among the best ships the Royal Navy had. The Admiralty naturally rued the naval restrictions of the Washington Treaty, which limited tonnage by classes, and the Treasury’s parsimony that curbed much intended new construction. Navies always have to manage with what the state affords, but in the case of the Royal Navy in the Second World War, the materials available were never sufficient to deal with the several simultaneous requirements, notably in the Atlantic, Mediterranean, Indian and Pacific Oceans.

It was not imperial over-reach that was the problem but lack of the means to assert influence, and to defend British interests in time of war. Indeed, during the Ethiopian crisis of 1935, when Italy had extended its empire into Abyssinia, the British could not assert their influence because, as Lord Chatfield, the First Sea Lord of that day put it, Britain could not face the possibility of waging war against Italy and Japan in combination.

But now, in late 1941 the possible horrors had become realities: Britain was at war with three nations, each with considerable naval assets. The first task was to deal with Germany, keeping merchant shipping flowing to the United Kingdom, or passing securely to north Russia, all the while deploying naval forces to gain command in the Mediterranean, invade North Africa in
1942, keep Egypt secure, and eventually invade Italy. The tragic scenario of Force Z and Singapore was played out against a much larger course of events—a quite complicated one, we need to remember. Force Z was puny, but it was the best available.

The C-in-C was acting Admiral Sir Tom Phillips—126 pounds, 5’ 2,” known as “Tom Thumb” or “Wee Tom,” pale and unhealthy in prospect. “All brain and no body” was the way one acquaintance described him. But Phillips was impressive in other ways: knowledgeable in naval matters, diligent and thorough, quick and decisive in attack. He had been raised in the Nelsonic tradition: “Engage the enemy more closely.”

On 8 December Phillips resolved on action. Almost to the last man, his bosses in Whitehall had not expected Japan to precipitate matters; they gave no guidance, except to send a signal on the 7th that they expected him to do something.

What does a task force do? It cannot defend a naval base except to command the sea, and it cannot long remain in harbour. It must go to sea and either seek out the enemy or avoid him. The latter was unthinkable, and for Phillips to lose his force in some archipelago was a figment of imagination. If a Japanese expedition was in the South China Sea, proceeding toward Thailand, Malaya, Borneo, or the Dutch East Indies, Phillips was obliged to respond. This meant seeking out Japanese transports or warships off the east coast, between Singora, the southern part of Thailand’s Kra Isthmus and Kota Bharu, northern Malaya. Phillips correctly opted to do this. If he could achieve surprise, and if he had air cover on arrival, he anticipated success.

Phillips sailed from Singapore into the red sunset. He asked for fighter cover off Singora at daylight on the 10th. Air Vice-Marshal Pulford, commanding the RAF in Malaya, replied just as Phillips was passing through the boom at the entrance to Johore Strait that fighter protection was impossible. Phillips’s reaction was a shrug of the shoulders: “Well, we must get on without it.”

He did hope that fighter cover would still materialize. Acting Chief of Staff Afloat, Captain L.H. Bell, later recounted: “The Admiral relied on the speed and surprise of the battleships’ attack to avoid damage to these ships sufficient to slow them down, believing that Japanese aircraft would not be carrying anti-ship bombs and torpedoes and that the Force on retirement would only have to deal with hastily organized long-range bombers from bases in Indo-China.”

Phillips accepted Japanese high-level bombing as an acceptable risk, and believed it unlikely to inflict vital damage to modern capital ships in the face of intense >>
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AA fire. To date in the history of warfare, no torpedo-bombers had been delivered at a greater range than 200 miles. Singora was believed to be over 300 miles, and Kota Bharu, his other option, nearly the same distance from the nearest Indo-China bases. In fact, the nearest bases were 475 miles from Singora and 425 from Kota Bharu. Such assumptions were based on British, German and Italian combat experience. Not known in Singapore, or other places where British naval intelligence operated, was that Japanese torpedo-bombers had an operational radius of 700 to 750 nautical miles.

Contrary to his critics, Phillips was not unmindful of the threat of enemy air power. But he did hold, on the basis of the sad experience in Norway, that gunners manning AA installations had to be better trained and more resolute at their weapons. He believed that ship mobility could stave off the attack, and that a battleship had a reasonable degree of success in the circumstances. No commanding officer would say his ship was unsinkable, save for Admiral Lutjens commanding Bismarck and Prinz Eugen. But Phillips, like many naval officers of his time, was a believer in capital ships, and a battleship was to an admiral as a cathedral was to a bishop, as strategist and historian Sir Basil Liddell Hart put it. (The sinking of the two ships did not change Admiralty opinion on this for some time.)

Officers of Phillips’s generation contended that the threat of high-level and dive-bombing was exaggerated, though aerial torpedo attack was taken more seriously. Such attacks were likely to occur in narrow seas or in range of shore-based aircraft (whose range was thought to be limited). Phillips was a true believer that AA fire could fend off enemy attack or put pilots off their aim. No naval experience had occurred in these matters as regards planes versus battleships in open waters. The loss of the Prince of Wales and Repulse was the first sinking by air attack of capital ships at sea (the U.S. battleships at Pearl Harbor had been at moorings or at quayside).

Phillips’s arrival at Singapore without the carrier Indomitable (which had gone aground on a sandbar in the West Indies) meant that he was devoid of fighter protection, though he did have the possibilities of aerial reconnaissance, seaplanes launched from capital ships, which were not used in the circumstances.

Even had Indomitable been available, the Navy had very rudimentary carrier-based fighters. The Japanese, as the Americans discovered, had a marked superiority at that time. A carrier would have provided greater certainty of the existence and location of enemy forces, but in terms of engagement would have meant very little. Perhaps its Swordfish aircraft could have posed a minor threat to enemy surface vessels, if found; but that is the extent of wishful thinking. If it had been there, Indomitable probably would have been sunk too. The Japanese had studied carefully the Royal Navy’s attack on the Italian fleet at Taranto in November 1940 and had planned Pearl Harbor with this knowledge. (See Greg Hughes’ comments in following article. —Ed.)

Two types of Japanese naval aircraft figure in our story: the Mitsubishi G4M, called “Betty” by the Americans, a long-range medium bomber operational throughout the Japanese war. With speed of 276 mph, a range of 3,450 miles, extraordinary climbing ability (ground to 26,245 feet in 32.4 minutes) the G4M had first been deployed against China in mid-1941, and then moved south to Saigon and other Indo-China bases. The Mitsubishi G3M2, aka “Nell,” was a land-based reconnaissance plane developed into a bomber, first used in 1937 in China and deployed against American forces at Wake Island, the Philippines and Marianas. Essentially a torpedo-bomber, she was used in all kinds of maritime operations, a workhorse of the IJN.

The Betty and Nell bombers carried torpedoes of a type first manufactured in 1931 but improved and first delivered in April 1941. The specifics need not concern us here except to say that Modification 2, as delivered by the Betty, was 1841 pounds with an explosive charge of
452 pounds. Maximum launch speed was about 260 knots, range 2200 yards, speed 41 knots.

Nor were aircraft the only threat. The Japanese had twenty-eight transports, with troops embarked, for the landings in Malaya and Siam; two battlecruisers; three cruisers; twenty-four destroyers and twelve submarines disposed as close escort and covering forces of their Southern Command. The bombers, fighters and reconnaissance aircraft at Saigon were part of the force.

Phillips’s objective was Khota Baru, not Singora, for attack on the latter would have involved 120 miles further steaming on the return passage, well within enemy range in daylight hours, without air cover. He sought to minimize risk. But on the early evening of the 9th, despite miserable weather, Japanese reconnaissance planes spotted him, forcing Phillips to shape a course for Singapore. His staff and captains agreed with his decision, based on prudence.

Three hours later, towards midnight on the 9th/10th, Phillips received a signal from his Chief of Staff in Singapore, reporting that a Japanese landing was taking place at Kuantan, midway up the Malayan coast and only 120 miles from Force Z’s position, and not far off the track to Singapore. Its military position was significant to British interests, and it was vital to keep the enemy out of Kuantan, from which the Japanese could isolate all British forces to the north.

Phillips altered course for Kuantan, failing to notify Singapore; nor did he ask for fighter cover. He wished to keep radio silence and to deny the enemy knowledge of his exact position. Alas, unknown to Phillips, the Japanese submarine I.65 had spotted the British force at about 4pm on the 9th, and had reported it to Saigon.

Admiral Kondo, the Japanese Commander in Chief, aware of the movements of Force Z, detached cruisers to seek it out. His plan was to attack at dawn with all available naval aircraft and to complete the destruction with his battle fleet, then steaming south at best speed. A second submarine, I.58, spotted Force Z at 2:30am and released five torpedoes, all of which missed.

At eight o’clock in the morning of the 10th, Force Z was off Kuantan, the enemy nowhere in sight, and the landing report unsubstantiated. The weather was fine and clear, a light breeze, with no monsoon, as might be expected in that season. At 8:45 Force Z stood out to seaward to examine some barges and a tug sighted earlier. Around 10:15 it was spotted by a Japanese aircraft, and an hour later Japanese bombers and torpedo-bombers were converging on it.

Still there was no signal to the base for air protection—not even when the attack commenced. But messages were received in the War Room at Singapore by early afternoon, and tell the tragic story in a shattering crescendo of disaster:

12:04, from Repulse: “Enemy aircraft bombing.”

12:40, “Emergency. Have been struck by a torpedo on port side Repulse hit by 1 torpedo. Send destroyers.”

Soon thereafter: “Send all available tugs.” Within an hour Repulse had disappeared beneath the waves.

13:21, from fleet destroyer Electra: “HMS Prince of Wales sunk.”

The Japanese attack force (IJN’s 22nd Air Flotilla) in three squadrons—Genzan, Mikoro and Kanaya—consisted of thirty-four high-level bombers and fifty-one torpedo-bombers newly-based in Saigon. Abandoning its intended raid on Singapore to attack Force Z, it found the British ships about half an hour after leaving Saigon. The tactics employed during the attack, the German naval attaché in Tokyo, Vice Admiral Wenneker, shortly reported to Berlin, were first a wave of bombers to tie down the flak, then, shortly after, torpedo aircraft approaching from east and west. At 11:15 HMS Repulse was hit by a bomb dropped from a high level (11,000 feet); torpedo-carrying planes then made their low-level approach. Genzan force fired seven torpedoes at the Repulse, of which four hit their targets. Mikoro and Kanaya had similar success, as did Genzan, turning on Prince of Wales.
PRINCE OF WALES AND REPULSE...

A direct hit was scored on Repulse with a 250 kg bomb, starting fires but not slowing her speed. A wave of low-flying torpedo craft attacked from a height of 20 to 100 meters, releasing at targets from 400 to 100 meters. Two direct hits were scored on each ship. Repulse slowed to five or six knots. Next came a second wave, with four torpedo hits on Repulse, then a third, which reduced Prince of Wales to a similar speed. Another attack made by bombers scored two hits with 500 kg bombs. In all, thirty-four torpedoes were dropped, with 50 percent success, and twenty-one bombs, of which only three were direct hits.

The existence of a trained, effective naval air arm—ironically a concept Churchill had originated in World War I—was the prime factor in the Japanese victory. The German war diary: “Nothing could more fully justify the existence of such an organization than a victory of this magnitude.” In Berlin, naval authorities were cheered: the Bismarck had been avenged.

As the first message from Repulse was received in Singapore, fighters were sent. They were too late. The first arrived on the scene as Prince of Wales rolled over and sank. They flew over the destroyers making the rescue. Of Repulse’s total complement of 1309, forty-two officers including Captain W.G. Tennant and 754 men were picked up; from the Prince of Wales’s complement of 1612, ninety officers and 1195 ratings were rescued. Tom Phillips was lost along with Prince of Wales Captain, John Leach, a fine officer who might have gone to the top, as did later his son, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach—who was well aware of the threat of Argentine land-based fighters and tactical bombers during the Falklands war in 1982.

One of the fighter pilots, Flight-Lieutenant T.A. (Tim) Vigors, in one of the first aircraft to reach the surviving crews, reported: “…never before have I seen anything comparable with what I saw yesterday. I passed over thousands who had been through an ordeal the greatness of which they alone can understand, for it is impossible to pass on one’s feelings in disaster to others….I had seen many men in dire danger waving, cheering, and joking as if they were holiday-makers at Brighton waving at a low-flying aircraft. It shook me, for here was something above human nature. I take my hat off to them, for in them I saw the spirit which wins wars.”

The entire attack had lasted two hours. Anyone who had doubted Japanese efficiency in the air had been given an answer. Within three days the IJN had not only mauled the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, but had sunk two capital ships at sea some 400 miles from their bases. With the loss of only three aircraft, the Japanese had shattered British sea power in the Far East, isolated Hong Kong, exposed Singapore, imperiled the Pacific Dominions and unraveled an empire. The Indian Ocean lay open, the Philippines and Dutch East Indies seemed doomed, and Australia, New Zealand, Burma and India were threatened. All these results flowed from the catastrophe of 10 December 1941.

The Aftermath

In his war memoirs Churchill wrote that Chance played a fatal part in the tragedy of these ships. Reviewing the evidence Stephen Roskill, the official historian writing the Cabinet Office’s Military History, The War at Sea, vol. 1, 567, was not so sure:

Though chance may have played a part in guiding the homeward-bound enemy striking force to the squadron’s position, it had several times been reported by submarines and aircraft. It therefore seems unlikely that, even had Admiral Phillips not gone to Kuantan in search of a non-existent landing force, it would have escaped attack.

There was also the large Japanese surface force descending from the north on Force Z’s reported position. Even had Prince of Wales and Repulse fought off the 22nd Air Force flotilla, they would have been engaged by that superior surface force.

Discussion of the fighting efficiency of the Prince of Wales invariably arises. Phillips was well aware that the long sea voyage to the Far East and the lack of aids, such as targets for improving firing accuracy, made her less than fully efficient. “Even a fully efficient ship, however, could hardly have warded off the fate which overtook the battleship,” Roskill wrote, “though her unsatisfactory condition is a minor issue compared with the strategic policy which placed her where she met her end…. As to the Repulse, an ancient vessel (1916) built for speed rather than strength, he had equally poignant comments:

It was hardly to be expected that such a ship could successfully withstand blows of a far more lethal power, and of a totally different type from those which she had been designed a quarter of a century earlier to resist. The lessons driven home by the tragedy of the Hood are partly applicable to this second disaster to a British battle cruiser. Parsimony towards the services in peace time will always bring such nemesis in war.

When it came time to write the Cabinet Office Official Military Histories, Roskill, a serious Churchill critic, was determined to get to the reasoning behind Churchill’s “veiled threat.” Tracking Churchill’s thought that the capital ships would lose themselves in some distant archipelago, he searched unsuccessfully for evidence of an order dispatching an oiler or tanker to such a location. But Churchill was transfixed on the idea that capital ships, such as Tirpitz, had pinned down Royal Navy assets, and certainly thought that Prince of
Wales and Repulse would do likewise to the Japanese. That assumption perhaps underestimated the enemy. It may be wondered indeed if anything could have been a deterrent, military or diplomatic, at that time. (See Ian Kershaw's Fateful Choices on how Japan went to war, reviewed last issue. —Ed.) True, the British had withdrawn much of their gunboat force from Chinese rivers to appease Japan, and the garrisons of Singapore and Hong Kong had been increased in strength. It is important to meet the mindset of the enemy if the odds are even, but in this case it was perhaps a delusion to imagine that anything would transfix the Japanese by that time.

We do not know what effect a larger naval force might have had. What we do know is that Churchill and Eden, his Foreign Secretary, were naturally keen to answer the appeals of Australia and New Zealand for long-promised support: that was the premise of the Singapore naval base. We seek explanations sometimes in places and circumstances in which they cannot be found. Force Z was caught in the jaws of fate. It was the great misfortune of those lost to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

It is hard to blame the Admiralty. “We…were solidly against sending out Prince of Wales to the Far East [and] dispatching a wholly unbalanced force into an area where we did not know the strengths…of the potential enemy,” wrote Captain (later Admiral Sir) William Davis, Deputy Director of Plans in the Admiralty, 1941: “…such action would make Prince of Wales a hostage to fortune.” They were overruled by the Defence Committee.

As late as 5 November, Churchill was still reviewing the plan. Even at that late date, his private secretary Jock Colville found, when reviewing the files twelve years later, it was not decided that the ships should sail on to Singapore, though it seemed likely. Also at the Admiralty, the First Lord, A.V. Alexander, and Admiral Sir Dudley Pound were against sending a battle squadron without a carrier: “We had great arguments with the P.M. about air cover,” Alexander wrote later.

Sir Leslie Rowan, in the Prime Minister’s inner circle, recalled that there was much going to and fro in the matter, but that it would have been entirely contrary to the Prime Minister’s habits and methods of work for him to take a decision on a matter of that sort against the expressed and maintained opposition of the Chiefs of Staff or of the Naval Staff of the Admiralty. Rowan contended that Churchill never overrode his professional naval, military or air authorities. He might on occasion have induced them to acquiesce in a decision against their better judgment.

This was the opinion of the distinguished American historian of the Royal Navy, Arthur Marder, who in his long-running battle with Roskill contended that Churchill was very careful not to override his professional service heads. We therefore come back to the Defence Committee’s decision—the most likely source of the unraveling story and catastrophe.

Like many a tragedy, the loss of Prince of Wales and Repulse is a story without end. Montagues and Capulets abound, and are likely to remain so in the future. But make no mistake: Admiral Phillips was a gallant seaman, trained in a fine naval service. He took his small fleet into danger and paid the ultimate price. The odds were long of success. The enemy had superior force at sea and in the air. Desmond Morton perhaps put it best:

Of course a historian writing later than the event described may demonstrate how much better it can now be seen that some other course would have succeeded in all probability than that chosen at the time. But in no circumstance can he criticize the actors for reaching the conclusions they did at the time, unless he can demonstrate that they disregarded facts known to them, acted with duplicity or malice or were demonstrably unfit for the positions they held. …Democracy judges solely by results. Historians must never do so.3

There will always be a school of historical thought in the field of military studies that is wise after the event. But it already has far too many adherents.

Endnotes

1. Winston S. Churchill, The Grand Alliance (London: Cassell, 1950), 551. Throughout I have relied on Arthur Marder’s Old Friends, New Enemies: The Royal Japanese Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy, Strategic Illusions, 1936-1941 (Oxford University Press, 1981) and on his notes, some which are in my possession; and on the papers (in Churchill Archives Centre) of Stephen Roskill, author of The War at Sea (London: HMSO, 3 vols., 1954-61), the first volume of which contains his account of this episode. The present essay derives from my double biography, in progress, of Marder and Roskill. I thank Bernie Webber, Edward J. Anderson and Jan Drent for information and advice.

2. After I presented this paper David Ramsay, the biographer of Admiral Reginald “Blinker” Hall, passed me a note from Hall to a friend on 11 December 1941: “Well, if we won’t learn the lessons we paid so dearly for at Crete and Greece we shall go on losing ships….we do pay dearly for our lessons and the fools who will not learn them. I refer to the powers at the top; though I shall never understand how Tom Phillips came to go out into air controlled waters without air support.”

The excellent papers published in FH 138 about the fall of Singapore frame the debate nicely. I would add just one all-important perspective.

By the 1920s, probably earlier, Great Britain had become the victim of Imperial over-reach. The Empire was too big, too complex, too full of energy and challenges, to be controlled without being able to discipline the wayward. Yet the tool Britain had used before—the aura of power and strength that was only sparingly, even “surgically” applied—had become hollow. The aura remained, but the power and strength had to be rationed—and what the British called the “Far East” got short rations. Because of those short rations, what I call the Imperial Imperative asserted itself. The concept was simple: Never address the stark reality that Britain could no longer afford to provide physical protection for its entire Empire. Choices had to be made, but those choices—the Ten-Year Rule, for example—were always disguised as postponements or sensible efficiencies. Rare was the admission that Britain could not perform its dominant role—only play it.

Presciently, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Winston S. Churchill, writing early in 1922, warned that “if Singapore fell in the first two or three months of a war, the whole of the Pacific would fall under the complete supremacy of Japan, and many years might elapse before either Britain or the United States could re-enter that Ocean in effective strength.”¹ A few months later, the necessities of domestic politics prompted him to back away from a strong stand in favor of the Singapore naval base, and he would take the Treasury’s even more critical approach two years later when he became Chancellor of the Exchequer. But if Churchill’s comments in 1941 are any indication, he seems never to have lost his faith in the Singapore fortress, even if he underestimated Japanese strength and was willing to postpone construction of the base. In fact, that contradiction—that Singapore was needed, but not right away—was an admission that Britain could not defend its Empire. But the Imperial Imperative either prevented Churchill and other British officials from saying so, or blinded them to the inconsistency of their arguments.

That Imperial Imperative was part and parcel of Churchill’s Singapore strategy after 1942. That strategy, deserving of separate study, called for the “liberation” of Singapore by British regular (i.e., white European) forces. He recognized that the Japanese victory threatened the image of British strength and invincibility, an illusion that was essential to maintaining control over an Empire that was far, far larger than its colonial master. But it was too late. Louis Allen, in his book Singapore, wrote of a Japanese soldier’s diary, picked up on the battlefield at Mawlu in Burma on 18 April 1944. It contains the usual items: war songs, Imperial proclamations, exhortations to a soldier’s duty, maps of East Asia, introductions to the customs of various Asian peoples. But its illustrations show something else. One page has a line drawing of British POWs, head and shoulders; another the triumphant Yamashita facing General Percival across the surrender table; overleaf is a pen drawing of the downcast “defeated general Percival”; overleaf again a painting of British and Australian troops, naked to the waist, sweeping the streets of Singapore—masters of the East performing menial tasks. Allen wrote:

“No purely military or strategic advantage can be compared to what those illustrations represented not only for the Japanese soldier who carried the diary, but also for the peoples of Asia. Clumsily, cruelly, hesitantly, he liberated them from the domination of Great Britain and her European allies. Even when Japan was defeated, she had made it impossible for the Allies to return to Asia on their own terms.”²

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². Louis Allen, Singapore, 1941-1942 (London: Davis-Poynter, 1977), 263.
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Repulse had scraped her bottom near Jamaica, 138 do not mention that Force Z had capital ships, but that the new aircraft carrier Henry V, on the latter, he adds: rather than separate booklets analysis too far. My point would have been a in her Indomitable “God Fought for Us” was part of the plan as it developed, above all else to preserve the appearance if not the fact of Imperial ascendancy during WW2 is subject to the consideration that the Dominions had independence, and India was on the way to it, years before the war started; and without them there wasn’t much of an Empire. Indeed, as David Freeman writes (page 17), the war actually impeded the Empire’s end. And Winston Churchill, for all his protestations, probably knew that.

2. “God Fought for Us”

GREG HUGHES, Emerald, Queensland


Amongst my countrymen, Churchill often gets a bad rap, which boils down to two irritants: Gallipoli and Singapore. The first really should have been debunked by now. Singapore is a bit more complex, not least because the survival of Australia was perceived to be in question. Again the local commanders were, to put it gently, not of the first rank. Like Gallipoli, the battle was lost at almost precisely the moment that the enemy (in this case Yamashita) ran out of ammunition. As for Churchill’s culpability, only a barking madman would have put his best generals in a zone at peace when there was real fighting to be done elsewhere. Churchill was reprimising exactly what Australian Command had done: in 1941, all our best officers were in the Middle East.

To the question of reinforcements, could Churchill have done more than send two capital ships to pose a “vague menace”? Yes, and he did. Your Proceedings articles in FH 138 do not mention that Force Z had three capital ships, but that the brand new aircraft carrier HMS Indomitable had scraped her bottom near Jamaica, was unable to join the fleet, and Phillips opted to sail without her. In view of this, Harris’s parting words to Phillips are painfully apposite.

One modern aircraft carrier, forty-eight modern fighters: It would be over-reaching to think they would have turned the tide at Singapore, but the enemy was every bit as stretched. Nagumo, with the bulk of the Japanese fleet, was on the other side of the Pacific, having just hit Pearl Harbour with a carbon copy of a “Slapdash,” Admiral Cunningham’s brilliant action at Taranto. There, one carrier and twenty obsolete biplanes shredded the Italian “Force in Being.” Is it legitimate to speculate that the Force Z as originally conceived might have produced a different result?

When Marshal Ney recommended French officers for advancement and sang the praises of their military prowess to his Emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte is reported to have replied simply, “Yes, but have they Luck?” Luck was not on our side at Gallipoli, nor at Singapore. Exactly six months later, two flights of American dive bombers terminated Imperial Japan’s ambitions in five short minutes. Midway was a textbook case of how to win a war: superb tactics and leaders, brilliant intelligence, second rate weapons...it had, well, almost everything.

Democracy is chosen by the people, or possibly both. No matter which, you’d have to be a mug to fight it, and I am very glad it won. Occasionally one must revert to Shakespeare: “Is it not lawful, an please Your Majesty, to tell how many is killed?”...“Yes, captain; but with this acknowledgement, that God fought for us.” —Henry V, act 4, scene 8.

Editor’s note: The only downside to our publishing Proceedings in Finest Hour rather than separate booklets is that the papers appear sooner, but not simultaneously. At Vancouver last year, Professor Barry Gough (see pages 40-47) discussed Prince of Wales, Repulse, and the carrier Indomitable. On the latter, he adds:

“Indomitable was part of the plan as it developed, but the specific composition of the task force was never spelled out, so sailing only when Force Z was ‘complete’ did not arise. I believe Indomitable would have been a liability, and her forty-eight aircraft could not have provided high-altitude protection against the Japanese Navy’s land-based bombers. Admiral Sir James Somerville, C-in-C of the new Eastern Fleet, who had experiences of this sort in the Mediterranean, said that had he been in Phillips’ shoes and lost his carrier, he would have refused to go to Singapore and instead sailed for Darwin, Australia. For these reasons I have chosen not to press the Indomitable analysis too far. My point was, and is, that Admiral Phillips had overabundant faith in AA gunnery. In addition, he could not get the fighter cover needed, partly owing to communications foul-ups, some bad signals, and his own refusal, perhaps inability, to break silence—and yes, bad luck.”
Sir Winston Spencer Churchill left such a large record, so much of it crafted by himself, that even the best scholars fail to get their arms around him. And there are so many fascinating side issues to distract us! Take for example his passion for and genuine love of animals.\(^1\)

Cats were part of Churchill’s life at both his official and private residences. Grace Hamblin, who was both his secretary and his wife’s at Chartwell from 1932 to 1965, addressed the unportentous side of his life at the 1987 International Churchill conference:

He loved cats. So do I and he knew it. He always had a cat, if not two. I must tell you one lovely cat story. It was way, way back in the Thirties. He came to his door one morning with some papers in his hand and a cat was sitting in the passage: “Good morning, Cat.” But the cat didn’t answer. It was one of those horrible snooty things. So he said again, “Good morning, Cat.” The cat made no effort to be near him. He slashed at it with his papers and the cat ran from the house. Cat didn’t return the next day.

Mr. Glueckstein thanks Lady Soames for kindly reviewing this article. His previous pieces were “Winston Churchill and Colonist II” (FH 125) and “The Statesman John Kennedy Admired Most” (FH 129).
or the next or the next. Finally he said, “Do you think it’s because I hit him?” Of course I said, “Yes, definitely.”

That evening I was whiling away my time while the family had dinner downstairs, when Sarah came up and said, “Ham bone, I have a message for you from Papa. He said if you like you may go home, and if you wish before you go, you may put a card in the window to say that if Cat cares to come home, all is forgiven.” Cat did come home several days later with a wire round his neck. Given cream and the best salmon and so on, he did recover, I’m glad to say.5

There was a succession of Chartwell cats. Two of them were Mickey, a large tabby, and Tango, a marmalade. William Manchester related an amusing story in _The Last Lion_, volume II, about the former. Churchill was speaking on the telephone to the Lord Chancellor when Mickey began playing with the telephone cord. WSC shouted, “Get off the line, you fool!” Realizing his mistake he turned his attention back to the Lord Chancellor: “Not you!” he said.

Later, wrote Manchester, “he offered the cat his apologies, which he never extends to human beings, cajoling the pet, cooing, ‘Don’t you love me anymore?’ and proudly telling his valet at breakfast next day, ‘My Mickey came to see me this morning. All is forgiven.”’3

In a 2 March 1935 letter to his wife, who was on a cruise in the South Pacific, WSC brought her up to date on Chartwell’s menagerie, including Tango: “The cat treats me very graciously and always wishes to sleep on my bed (which I resent). When I dine alone, and only then, she awaits me on the table.”4 Churchill’s daughter Mary would later write: “It is curious that my father habitually endowed the beautiful marmalade neutered male cat, called Tango, with the feminine gender.”5

Churchill’s affection for and patience with cats grew over time. During the war, Sir John Colville, his principal private secretary, remembered one episode involving Tango on 3 June 1941. The war was going badly. The British had evacuated Greece; Crete was falling; Lord Beaverbrook was being difficult; the Navy had lost several ships in the Mediterranean. Colville recorded the lunch they shared that day:

I had lunch with the P.M. and the Yellow Cat, which sat in a chair on his right-hand side and attracted most of his attention. He was meditating deeply on the Middle East, where he is intent on reorganizing the rearward services, and on Lord Beaverbrook who is proving particularly troublesome…. While he brooded on these matters, he kept up a running conversation with the cat, cleaning its eyes with his napkin, offering it mutton and expressing regret that it could not have cream in war-time.6

The Prime Minister’s best-known cat during the war years was a big grey named Nelson. During a dinner at Chequers, the American war correspondent, Quentin Reynolds records Churchill as saying: “Nelson is the bravest cat I ever knew. I once saw him chase a huge dog out of the Admiralty. I decided to adopt him and name him after our great Admiral…. It was a cosy family dinner, Reynolds continued: “Churchill scarcely mentioned the war. Our first course was smoked salmon and twice, when Mrs. Churchill was not looking, the Prime Minister sneaked pieces of salmon to Nelson.”7

When WSC became Prime Minister in May 1940, he and his family had moved into Ten Downing Street, which had a resident cat, Lady Soames recalls: “He was treated with great kindness but we disrespectfully named him Munich Mouser, since he was a holdover from Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain’s administration.”

Observers knew that Nelson was soon moving into Number Ten, and could not resist poking fun at the felines: “Nelson will follow his master shortly to Downing Street and make a problem of protocol. How, it is asked will the Munich cat react to Nelson? Will he follow Chamberlain next door to his new home at No. 11 leaving the field at No. 10 to Nelson? Or will he refuse to abdicate and call for a show-down in His Majesty’s court of justice?”8

It was the latter: the scrappy Nelson did not take a liking to Munich Mouser and, as was his wont, took decisive action. Lady Soames recalled that he chased Munich Mouser out of Number Ten; one must hope that the Mouser found another home next door.

Silly stories circulated that Nelson sat in with Churchill at Cabinet meetings: not so, though he may have wandered in on occasion. Always his ardent admirer, WSC told a colleague that Nelson was doing more than he was for the war effort, since Nelson served as a prime ministerial hot water bottle.

Another Churchill cat, residing at the flat at Number Ten Annexe, was Smoky—like Nelson a grey of uncertain lineage. While her husband was traveling to meet President Roosevelt in Casablanca January 1943, Mrs. Churchill wrote:

The “Annexe” & No 10 are dead and empty without you—Smoky wanders about disconsolate—I invite him into my room & he relieves his feelings by clawing my brocade bed-cover & when gently rebuked, biting my toe through it.”9

Once during an important wartime meeting, WSC and a cat did cross paths (photo opposite). In August 1941, Churchill met President Roosevelt on board HMS _Prince of Wales_, when they rendezvoused off the coast of Newfoundland. As the Prime Minster listened to the American national anthem on the deck of the British warship, he saw the ship’s large cat Blackie, moving >>
“CATS LOOK DOWN ON YOU…”
toward the USS Augusta, which was moored alongside. The Prime Minister bent down to stroke Blackie’s head, perhaps stopping him from deserting ship.

When the photograph of WSC parting Blackie was published, cat fanciers were affronted. Cat, the monthly publication of the Cats Protective League, scolded that cats abhor head-patting and added: “He should have conformed to the etiquette demanded by the occasion, offering his hand and then awaiting a sign of approval before taking liberties.” 10 No one ever said being Prime Minister was easy.

After Newfoundland, the crew named Blackie “Churchill” and he became a beloved ship’s mascot. Later that year, Prince of Wales was sunk by Japanese aircraft off Malaya (see page 40). Despite vast loss of life, Churchill made it with some of the crew to Singapore, where he encamped with the survivors. In February 1942, when orders came to evacuate Singapore, Churchill, who was believed off foraging for food, could not be found and was sadly left behind.

Kittens were always special, Grace Hamblin said. One day at Chartwell a neighbor brought a basket of white kittens, each wearing a red bow, hoping Sir Winston would take his pick. Miss Hamblin decided that there were already too many cats at Chartwell, declaring, “There is no way I am going to stand for one more Lord Warden of the Cinque Mouseholes. There are quite enough as it is!”

So she took the basket up to his bedroom, and told WSC: “Now you are not to have these, they are just here for a visit.” An hour later he summoned her back. The kittens were everywhere, tearing into his newspapers, climbing around the room, investigating his bedclothes. “Take these kittens away,” Churchill commanded, “before I fall in love.” 11

One kitten that did capture his fancy was at Downing Street during Churchill’s postwar premiership. On the evening of 10 October 1953 Lord Moran, Churchill’s physician, called at Number Ten to see his patient, who was recovering from a stroke some months earlier. Earlier that day, WSC had delivered a fighting speech at Margate to the Conservative Party Conference. Moran found him listening to the wireless reports of Margate, with Clementine, his daughter Diana, his son-in-law Duncan Sandys, and Jock Colville. Churchill was in fine spirits, relaxed and satisfied that the speech had gone well:

A small black kitten jumped on to his knee. It was found on the steps of No.10 and had been taken in. “It has brought me luck,” he said, stroking the purring cat. He had assumed proprietorship. “It shall be called Margate.” Rufus, the P.M.’s poodle, had gone to bed in a sulk. 12

Three days later, his wife now in France, WSC wrote her, as he often did when they were apart. After talking about the negative French reaction to the Margate speech—Churchill had welcomed West Germany “back among the Great Powers of the World”—he wrote: “The Kitten is behaving admirably & with its customary punctilio! Rufus is becoming gradually reconciled. Generally the domestic situation is tranquil.” 13

A week later Lord Moran again called, finding Churchill and his new friend à deux: “I found the P.M. reading The Times, while the black kitten, lying on its back, pawed the fluttering edges of the paper.” 14

For Sir Winston’s 88th birthday in November 1962, Sir John Colville gave him a ginger cat with a white chest and paws. Named “Jock,” the cat became a favorite, often found on Churchill’s knee. Churchill took Jock to his London home at Hyde Park Gate when he traveled there from Chartwell.

In frail health and using a cane, WSC visited the House of Commons for the last time on 27 July 1964. Wearing a dark bow tie, black jacket, with long white cuffs below his jacket sleeves, he was photographed leaving his London home for Parliament. In the foreground of the photograph was Jock. 15

Sir Winston died at Hyde Park Gate at the age of 90 on 24 January 1965. With his passing, the National Trust took possession of Chartwell 16 and the Churchill family asked that a marmalade cat named Jock always have residence at his beloved country home.

“After Sir Winston’s death Jock lived on at Chartwell, where he had the run of the house,” a National Trust spokesman said after the cat died at the age of 13 in January 1975. “He would spread out in front of the fire, just as he did when Sir Winston was alive. The public loved him.”

In accord with the family’s wish, a new marmalade cat, Jock II, replaced the original, and the National Trust has ensured that the tradition continues. The incumbent today is Jock IV.

Like his predecessors, Jock IV is a marmalade with white paws and bib. “He is about five to six years old,” said Caroline Bonnett of the National Trust. “He lives in an apartment at Chartwell with a member of staff, and has his own National Trust Green cat flap [kitty door] which has been approved by our Historic Buildings Inspector.

“He is a very affectionate cat and has trained the Chartwell staff very well. He spends most of his day sleeping on various chairs and beds around his apartment. He tends to be much more active at night, when he gets out and about in the garden.” 17

Knowing that a marmalade still lives comfortably at Chartwell would have pleased its famous master.
Endnotes

1. By late 1936, according to William Manchester, Chartwell had “an astonishing array of pets: lambs, bantams, a Blenheim spaniel, a beige-colored pug dog, a marmalade cat, two fox cubs, and three goats, one of whom produced twins while the other gave birth to triplets, and all of whom ate the cherry trees, to Clementine’s indignation.” William Manchester, The Last Lion: Winston Spencer Churchill, vol. 2, Alone 1932-1940 (Boston: Little Brown, 1988), 254.


5. Ibid., 389 n. 1.


16. Gilbert, op. cit., 304. Churchill sold Chartwell to a group of friends led by Lord Camrose, who presented it to the National Trust on 29 November 1946, with the proviso that WSC and his wife could live there as long as they wanted; after WSC’s death, his wife left and took an avid interest in Chartwell’s conversion to a National Trust property, which was opened to the public on 22 June 1966.

17. Caroline Bonnett, Assistant Visitor Services and Marketing Manager for Chartwell, Emmetts Garden and Quebec House, correspondence with the author, 2 July 2007. Ms. Bonnett also told the author about Jock III, “a beautiful cat with a fairly bad temper! He made quite a habit of scratching staff (and visitors) but could also be very affectionate. He was often out in the garden meeting visitors and particularly enjoyed sleeping in flower beds on sunny days.”
asked to list the greatest political leaders, few including his critics omit the name of Winston Churchill. His period as Prime Minister in World War II must rank as a prime example of wartime leadership. As we consider that leadership we see images of his famous speeches and broadcasts to his embattled countrymen. More than sixty years after the war ended, “We shall fight on the beaches…we shall never surrender” and “Men will still say, ‘this was their finest hour’” resound in the conscience of free peoples. Churchill changed the world with words.

To accept that Churchill’s words were influential is however only a first step in understanding their impact. How did he, as broadcaster Ed Murrow and President John F. Kennedy said, “mobilize the English language and send it into battle”? How did he craft speeches that served as an indispensable cornerstone of his wartime achievement?

The answers to such questions are nuanced and varied, but one fact stands out. Churchill was foremost a student of the English language: a man who mastered the art of the written word in ways that few achieve. Yet being a great writer did not guarantee great leadership; it did not even guarantee that his political speeches would be particularly effective—and certainly not on such a grand scale. It thus remains to discover how his literary skill and political leadership were intertwined.

Churchill’s writing talent allowed him to articulate vision, a key aspect of leadership. Widely considered a key component of political leadership, particularly in a time of conflict, vision is an admittedly broad concept. But a leader’s vision is demonstrated by his ability effectively to frame or define the conflict and the combatants on his own terms, and in the context that he wishes to portray them.

Sir Martin Gilbert defined Churchill’s “astonishing vision” as “clarity as to the purpose of the war...that it was a just war, a war being fought against evil.” In that context, it was necessary to define the enemy, the nature of the conflict and the character of his people. Churchill’s vision shaped the way Britain, her Allies, Germany, and the war itself were understood, and his speeches conveyed and articulated that vision. By studying and cataloguing the images, phrases and words Churchill used to define the enemy from 1932 (his first mention of Adolf Hitler) to the conclusion of his premiership, a much more coherent explanation for the power of his speeches emerges.

A study of Churchill’s definitional strategies reveals two salient facts. First, he displayed remarkable consistency in the specific images and phrases he used to define the actors and the conflict. His several leitmotifs and array of common descriptions were used both to emphasize his vision and to provide a sense of continuity to his listeners. Second, despite his consistent image
“Churchill used an antithetical image of a Britain in total opposition....In contrast to the ‘pagan barbarians,’ he offered ‘Christian civilization,’ not in a religious sense, but as antithesis—one of the most familiar and most enduring of Churchill’s definitional strategies.”

patterns, there was a noticeable evolution in the strategy in which he utilized those images. In other words, he maintained the same arsenal of images but deployed them with varying emphasis according to the time and context, reflecting his keen understanding of the political and world situation.

For example, in the years before the conflict began, his focus was defining Germany as a threat, a task complicated both by Britain’s reluctance to face another war so soon after World War I and by his unpopular standing with the British government. Once the war had begun, his emphasis turned to defining the British people in their struggle for survival. Similarly, defining the conflict took a central role in Churchill’s definitional strategies as the war moved into full swing. The identity and threat of the enemy was clear, though the nature and outcome of the war had yet to be established, and he varied his strategies accordingly. In short, there was a noticeable evolution in his strategies, but it lay more in emphasis than in form.

What image patterns made up that definitive arsenal? Churchill’s first image patterns concerned Germany and its leaders—to show his countrymen that rising Nazi power was a threat to national security. When the threat became painfully obvious, he had to show that Hitler could be defeated. Churchill used numerous images to define the enemy, but the most enduring were his characterizations of the Third Reich’s barbarism and soullessness; blood imagery; and his separation of the German people from the Nazi government.

To characterize German barbarity he often referred to its military “machine,” driven by soulless science; here he saw a nation of great intellect and technology that had been corrupted by an autocratic regime. The German military machine became the personification of the hated Nazi ideology, as on 4 March 1937, when he implored: “Let us not ignore what they are doing. They are welding entire nations into war-making machines.”

Closely related to his characterization of Germany as barbaric and soulless was “blood imagery”: a constant and vivid reminder of the death and destruction Germany was wreaking, and a reminder that, while the Allies had not “bled Germany” during World War I, Germany was now bleeding the rest of the Continent. Indeed it was the German “military organism” that was bleeding the rest of the world dry. In 1933 he crafted the disturbing image of a “philosophy of bloodlust being inculcated into their youth in a manner unparalleled since the days of barbarism.”

Here he accomplishes two things. He continues the image pattern of blood, pairing it with the image of youth to create a description of Germany as a barbaric country fueled by the blood lust of its youth. This barbarism will later be strongly contrasted with the “civilization” of England and the Allies. Similar was his declaration that a “dark stream of blood flows between the Germans and almost all their fellow men.” The “bloodiness” of the German government became all the more apparent as the days passed, and Churchill missed no opportunity to drive it home.

Finally, separating the German people from the Nazi government was one of Churchill’s most inspired and effective literary strategies. As Martin Gilbert points out, “It was not ‘Germany’ or the German people, but a perversion of all that was decent, human, modern and constructive in human society” that was the enemy in the fight.

It was the Nazi name that was to be hated and despised, and the “Hitlerites” or “Nazidom” that had to be destroyed. A prime image came on 30 March 1940, when he described Hitler as “a haunted, morbid being, who to their eternal shame, the German peoples in their bewilderment have worshiped as a god.” While Churchill did fault the German people for buying into the Nazi ideology, it was Hitler who was portrayed as the true perversion.

One of Churchill’s main purposes behind these definitional strategies was to ensure that the British would immediately and irrevocably recognize the threat and inherent evil of the Nazi regime. When he began defining Germany, his characterizations were vehement and bold, focusing largely on the physical threat that a rearmed Germany would pose to Europe and to England. But once the threat had emerged, he chose to focus on the evil nature of the regime. This spurred his countrymen to continue the fight. By successfully portraying the Nazis as evil, he convinced Britain of his ultimate vision: that the good must triumph.

Because the majority of Churchill’s war speeches were directed at the people, his responsibility was also to define Britain itself. He looked upon Britons as a valiant people, full of honor and strength, willing to sacrifice for a purpose and a cause greater than themselves. They were everything the Nazis were not and could never be.

Churchill used two main strategies to define his >>
country. The first was an antithetical image of a Britain in total opposition to the Nazis. While Germany was characterized as greedy and barbaric, Britain to Churchill was the leader of “Christendom” and the savior of civilization. When they stood alone the British were the last hope of civilization, and it was their honor to defend Christendom. In contrast to the “pagan barbarians,” he offered “Christian civilization,” not in a religious sense, but as antithesis—one of the most familiar and enduring of Churchill’s definitional strategies.

His second pattern of national definition was when Churchill referred to the “Island Race.” Far from being simply a geographical statement, the term represented a history of triumph and resilience in the face of adversity. By invoking British history, he inspired pride and enthusiasm for the task ahead. Thus he linked Britain’s survival with the survival of civilization. Because he told his people that they carried with them “the larger hopes of mankind,” they were yet more willing to take risks and to accept sacrifice. The island people were “an undefeated people,” capable if necessary of standing alone—as indeed they did for twelve of the most crucial months of the twentieth century. They were a nation capable of standing up for themselves, a nation used to going it alone. And when he said that “Nearly a thousand years have passed since we were subjugated by external force,” he was paving the way for his later speeches that would have to convince the British people that they could and would continue to live free by defeating the menace of Hitler.

While Churchill often referred to Britain’s allies, his definitions of the United States are of particular interest. American entry into the war was one of his aims, so he used such images as “a far greater champion has drawn the sword” to describe the power of the United States. But his most important definitional strategy was his linking of British with American interests.

One of the ways he did this was through his characterization of Britain and the United States as the “English-speaking peoples,” playing on shared history and values inextricably to intertwine the two nations. He began making such connections in his wartime speeches as early as 1940, when he attempted to persuade the U.S. to offer aid, and he strengthened the comparisons as the war progressed. By tying the fate of Britain to that of the United States, Churchill gave his people confidence that the united power of two powerful nations would defeat Hitler even more swiftly:

Churchill’s definitional strategies for the war itself combined image patterns already noted. Once again, this was a mainly antithetical construct, comparing the barbaric enemy with the goodness of Allied civilizations. To personify their conflict he used light versus dark imagery. One of the most enduring of these images occurred on 18 June 1940, when he warned that if Britain fell the world would “sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science.”

The light vs. dark motif was used to bring Churchill’s war-time speeches to a powerful and moving conclusion. The Allies carry the “light of the world,” from which they are erecting “a structure of peace, of freedom, of justice and of law.” The light of victory has paved the way for the forward march of mankind, and it is the light of freedom and justice that will light the way for future advances on the world stage. Light has defeated darkness: “Total war has ended in absolute victory.”

Sixty years removed from the Allied triumph, it seems absurd that anyone in Churchill’s time might have contemplated anything other than total victory. Looking back, we think it inevitable that the war would be won, that Hitler and the Nazis were evil personified and doomed to fall. But not everyone was so sure at the time, and the downfall of the Third Reich was not inevitable. Just as easily, the tide could have turned, and all of Europe could have fallen under the Nazi regime. Indeed the world could have slipped into the “abyss of a new Dark Age,” and might well have done so, without the vision and words of Winston Churchill.

Endnotes

1. winstonchurchill.org.
2. See Wolin, Sheldon S., The Study of Political Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Thought (Boston: Little Brown, 1960). Vision has long been considered a key part of political leadership. The importance of possessing vision is heightened in a crisis situation such as a war, and scholars (Gilbert for one) speak of vision as a necessary component of wartime leadership.
4. I use the phrase “definitional strategies” to refer to the image patterns, word choices, and phrases Churchill employed to define the various actors.
6. Ibid., V: 5297.
7. Ibid., VI: 6675.
8. Ibid., VI: 6675.
9. Manfred Weidhorn refers to this as the “name” category in his Churchill’s Rhetoric and Political Discourse (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1987).
10. Ibid., op. cit., 42.
12. Ibid., V: 5234.
13. Ibid., V: 5832.
15. Ibid., VI: 6585.
16. Ibid., VI: 6328.
17. Ibid., VII: 7101.
CHURCHILL QUIZ

JAMES R. LANCASTER

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

Level 4:
1. What event did WSC refer to when he wrote of his “profound relief” that “at last I had the authority to give directions over the whole scene”? (S)
2. What was Churchill’s father’s title? (P)
3. Who told Winston Churchill at Potsdam in July 1945, “I don’t think that Mr. Attlee looks like a man who would seize power”? (C)
4. To whom did WSC write in January 1941, “Your Majesties are about which battle did Churchill say in the summer of 1938 that he was “horribly entangled with ———. Which country did he refer to? (W)
5. June, 1954: “I have had a very comfortable journey / Fm my Fatherland / T o my Mother’s land.” WSC had just arrived in which country? (W)
6. One of the Morals of the War...was “In War: ———.” Fill in the missing word. (W)

Level 3:
7. About which book did Churchill say in the summer of 1938 that he was “horribly entangled with the Ancient Britons, the Romans, the Angles, Saxons and Jutes”? (L)
8. On 15 February 1942, WSC said in the House of Commons: “Into the gap thus opened rushed the invading armies of ———.” Which country did he refer to? (W)
9. What word did Churchill use to describe some of the newspaper articles he wrote in the 1930’s? (L)
10. Who was the longstanding American friend who once said, “England has three great assets: her Queen, her glorious past, and Winston Churchill”? (C)

Level 2:
11. WSC in the House on 10 May 1942 “——— forgot about this Russian winter. He must have been very comfortably / Fm the House...”. Fill in the person. (W)
12. How many sovereigns did Churchill serve? (C)
13. Churchill was an honorary citizen of seven American states. Name one of them. (M)
14. Which of Churchill’s books begins, “He who may be attracted by interest or driven by idleness to examine this book will find therein a tale of blood and war”? (L)
15. Which city in Morocco did WSC call “the most lovely spot in the whole world”? (P)
16. What did WSC often refer to as a “disappearage”? (P)
17. How did Churchill rename the World War II Communal Feeding Centres? (M)
18. Which President of the United States said of Churchill: “He is history’s child, and what he said and what he did will never die”? (S)

Level 1:
19. Who was the American ambassador in London who helped establish the Churchill Hospital in Oxford in 1941? (M)
20. About which battle did Churchill say on 3 July 1940, “The French were now fighting with all their vigour for the first time since the war broke out”? (W)
21. In November 1940, why did WSC ask Ronald Tree, “Would it be possible for you to offer me accommodation...when the moon is high”? (M)
22. Whom did WSC describe as “A really remarkable man. He did exactly what he liked—and liked what he did”? (P)
23. How did Churchill come up with the phrase “Sinews of Peace”? (S)
24. Why was Churchill in such a rush to publish The Story of the Malakand Field Force? (L)
In “The People’s Rights: Opportunity Lost?” (FH 112, Autumn 2001, 42) Andrew MacLaren wrote about the land tax, proposed by the American economist Henry George and strongly championed by the young Churchill in his radical-liberal period in the early 1900s. George propounded that while people have the right to possess what they produce, or receive in exchange for work, there is no right to private ownership of elements: air, water, sunshine and (the most contentious element) land. It became “a major point of Liberal policy,” MacLaren wrote, “to shift taxation from production and to raise taxation upon the value of land...The justice and practicality of this proposition can rarely if ever have enjoyed a more brilliant advocate than Winston Churchill.”

Purely by accident, while looking up quotations, we fell over Churchill’s explanation of why the tax on land didn’t work, and remained a lost opportunity for him and the Liberals.


“Let me return to the question why Henry George failed in his single tax proposal. It was because he had been studying the world as it had been for generations and centuries, and arrived at certain conclusions on that basis, and the conclusion he arrived at was that land was practically the sole source of all wealth. But almost before the ink was dry on the book he had written it was apparent that there were hundreds of different ways of creating and possessing and gaining wealth which had either no relation to the ownership of land or an utterly disproportionate or indirect relation.

“Where there were 100 cases twenty years ago there are 10,000 cases now, and that is why radical democracy, looking at this proposition of the single tax—there are two enthusiastic single taxers left in this House—has turned unhesitatingly towards the graduated taxation of the profits of wealth rather than to this discrimination in the sources from which it is derived, and that is what we have done.

“Let me point out what has happened in the last eighteen years. When this question of site values was being discussed in the Budget of 1909 the Income Tax and Super-tax together stood at the maximum, at 1s. 8d. in the pound; it is now 10s [half a pound]. Death Duties were 15 percent, on the highest estates, whereas they now reach 40 percent. There is not the slightest doubt that very vast changes have taken place in the whole of the methods by which taxation is raised, and those who wish to embark on any controversy upon the taxation of land values in the future must address themselves to the facts as they exist in this completely changed situation.”

**LEADING MYTHS**

Finest Hour has demolished the following “Leading Churchill myths,” which can be found in earlier issues or on our website at http://xrl.us/fk6by:

“Churchill was an alcohol abuser,” FH 111:33, Summer 2001.


“He let Coventry burn to protect intelligence,” FH 114:40, Spring 2002.


“Jack Churchill was not Lord Randolph’s son,” FH 125:11, Winter 2004-05.


Given the amount of myth-busting on pages 13-20 of this issue, we will have now to expand our list. ☞
Affiliates are in bold face

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For procedures required in becoming a formal affiliate, please contact the appropriate national office (page 2).
And thereby hangs a tale...

Clementine Churchill and Lady Broughton
Austrian Embassy, London, 1937

This striking photograph was taken by Erich Salomon, a cult figure today in German-speaking parts of Europe, and was shown in a 2006 Swiss exhibition of his work. Salomon, from a prominent Berlin Jewish family, tragically died in Auschwitz in July 1944. One of the first society photographers, he moved in elegant circles throughout the capitals of Europe.

Vera Edyth Griffith-Boscawen, Lady Broughton (1894-1968) was the first wife of Sir Delves Broughton, whom she subsequently divorced. She then became the mistress of Lord Moyne, heir to the Guinness brewery fortune. He was a close friend of the Churchills and owned a palatial yacht, the Rosaura, which cruised as far as the Pacific. Vera and Clementine were frequent guests. Churchill appointed Lord Moyne Minister Resident for the Middle East where, to Churchill’s horror, he was killed by Jewish extremists in 1944. In 1940 Sir Delves Broughton remarried, to Diana Caldwell, a Mayfair barmaid, and emigrated with her to Kenya. She was promptly seduced in Nairobi by a notorious philanderer, the Earl of Errol, who was later murdered. Broughton was prosecuted but was acquitted. He returned to England, ostracised and in disgrace, and committed suicide in the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, shortly after his ship docked.

—Geoffrey Fletcher, Rhode-Saint-Genèse, Belgium

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