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LITERARY CHURCHILL

I appreciated FH 141’s book recommendations for Churchill as orator, and “Admiring Shakespeare” (page 29). I was familiar with the Olivier and Burton incidents, but reading them in context was a delight. The literary Churchill is no less fascinating than his war whoops.

BRENDA ROSSINI, WINNETKA, ILL.

Michael Dobbs’s Churchill novels are fun while insightful, as are his views of the players of the era. His stories about the impact of the war on ordinary people usually end up intersecting with WSC. His speculations on events move the narrative along. He is pro-Churchill, but not doctrinaire. Many of my libertarian fellow-travelers are not as enamored of WSC, so I mention that here.

TODD ZYWICKI (aggrig@aol.com)

B.C. BUST-OUT

The attempt by my favourite magazine to justify and then to be amused by the return of the Epstein Churchill bust from the Oval Office (FH 142: 7-8) says a lot about The Churchill Centre and Mr. Obama, none of which is favourable.

It is not convincing to say the White House has more Churchilliana now that the bust is replaced by the official biography. If the bust was loaned, Bush should have returned it, failing which Obama should have delivered it to Bush. Failing to offer any creditable reason (not embarrassing to Obama) for the return, FH professes to be amused and to make fun of the incident.

The leadership of Churchill and Roosevelt saved the world from Nazism. While Mr. Obama may choose whatever busts he wishes to adorn the Oval Office, surely the return of the bust of such a great man requires an explanation.

VIC BURSTALL, PAST PRESIDENT
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It is disappointing to read in Finest Hour, of all places, your “amusement” over President Obama’s churlish ejection of the Churchill bust without explanation. Astonished readers can only assume that your partisanship in U.S. domestic politics takes precedence over respect for the memory of Sir Winston Churchill.

SIDNEY ALLISON, PRESIDENT
SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL SOCIETY OF VANCOUVER ISLAND, B.C.

Editor’s response: Sorry to be a bust in B.C. The Epstein was loaned for Bush’s term of office; but you’re equating a news story (Datelines) with a signed opinion (in the box). My views of Mr. Obama and his policies are unrepresented in these pages, but likening me to a Barackophile is also an amusement.

The media hoped Churchillians would snap over this, and that’s just what Newsweek wanted when they phoned me for an opinion. As my colleagues in Britain agree, we would have looked like fools to take the bait. Reductio ad absurdum was by far the better response.

POLES APART

While I have great respect for Prof. David Freeman, I could “bearly” control myself after reading his review of Winston of Churchill: One Bear’s Battle against Global Warming (FH 142: 56). Clearly we are at “polar opposites” in this matter. Besides his highly debatable comment that animals are the main cause of global warming, he seems to have missed the point that the book is for “ages 6 and up.” Suffice it for the little ones to know that global warming is a serious problem and that Winston the bear “is named for a real person, one of the greatest leaders in history….the courageous Prime Minister of England [sic] during World War II [who] inspired the people to never give up….When Winston the polar bear is trying to lead the bears to protest global warming, he uses some of the famous words of Sir Winston Churchill.”

TERRY REARDON, TORONTO, ONT.

Professor Freeman replies: The London Daily Telegraph reports that a Canadian scientist who has studied polar bears for thirty years was banned from a global warming conference because he had concluded that bears are multiplying and that global warming is mainly due to natural phenomena (http://xrl.us/bez8p5).

In 2008 the Los Angeles Times (not a right-wing bugle) ran a full page editorial (itself unusual) acknowledging that ruminants produced more greenhouse gas emissions than all carbon-burning fuel sources combined. If the aim is to educate the little ones, then why not present them with all the facts and let them decide for themselves?

Gen. George S. Patton once said: “If everyone is thinking the same, then no one is thinking at all.”
The Scotland We Know

Scotland shot itself in the foot in August, releasing on “compassionate grounds” a terrorist responsible for compassionately bombing 270 people over Lockerbie—for which the dictator Qaddafi quickly arranged an impromptu celebration: which says more about our modern tendency to turn all four cheeks than it does about Islamic fascists.

The Scotland we know is a different place, steeped in heroic figures and great deeds. Most of Britain’s wartime intelligence effort was directed by Scots. Churchill was born on St. Andrew’s Day, married a Scot, commanded a Scottish battalion, and forever celebrated the disproportionate contribution of Scots in both world wars. We were reminded of this Churchillian Scotland in July, when we logged 550 miles from Edinburgh to Skye and Argyll, beginning with a 50,000-strong celebration and Scottish games, “The Gathering” at Edinburgh on July 22nd-23rd.

Scotland had declared 2009, the 250th birthday of Robert Burns, a “Homecoming,” and there were more foreigners in Edinburgh that weekend than natives. We dined at a pub with a charming Aussie from Canberra:

“So tell me, mate, what’d the blinkin’ Poms ever do for our two countries, hey?”
“What about parliamentary democracy?” (I took a Churchillian approach to the debate.)
“Yeah, well...what else?”
“Magna Carta, Habeas Corpus, Trial by Jury....Imagine if we’d been colonized by the Germans or Russians.”
“All right, but what else, mate?”
“Beer.”
“Yeah, I’ll give you that...”

After dining with Professor Paul and Rosy Addison at the Royal Scots Club we headed for Skye, driving a very quick VW Passat diesel six-speed. (It is useful to have a fast car in Britain. In 1974, at the outset of what is now 50,000 miles of UK driving, I asked a local why they always pass on curves. “Because,” he laughed, “we don’t have anything else.”)

Skye is magnificent, though you need at least a week there. Barbara found a fine inn where a Michelin chef produced five-star dinners. We walked, drove one-track roads, saw gardens, castles, ruins and sheep. We even did some sailing in the Sound of Sleat, which is better than its name sounds, despite stiff 25 knot breezes and Atlantic rollers.

In the Scotland we love there are many places to reward Churchillians. Approaching Edinburgh from the south, you should visit Lennoxlove, near where Rudolf Hess parachuted in 1941, hoping to make contact with pro-Hitler elements and take Britain out of the war. (Instead he met the Duke of Hamilton, who locked him up.) Edinburgh is full of history, including the National War Museum, documenting Scotland’s role in Britain’s wars for the past 200 years.

Crossing the Firth of Forth, where Union Jacks snapped in the wind as Admiral Beatty watched the German High Seas Fleet sail into captivity in 1919, you reach Dundee, which Churchill served as MP for fourteen years. A vibrant modern city, Dundee is filled with Churchilliana: Sheriff Court, where WSC greeted his supporters in 1908; Marryat Hall, where he was declared the loser in 1922; Caird Hall, where he defied hecklers; Meadowside St. Paul’s Church, where The Churchill Centre helped subscribe to a plaque marking his tenure. In the lobby of the Queen’s Hotel, Churchill’s headquarters, is the plaque unveiled by Molly and Marcus Frost during the fifteenth Churchill Tour in 2008 (see Chartwell Bulletin 17).

For Churchills willing to drive far north and take the Orkney ferry, there is Scapa Flow, the great fleet anchorage which Churchill visited as First Lord of the Admiralty in both World Wars. There in October 1939, the German submarine U-47 skillfully navigated a tiny strait and torpedoed the battleship Royal Oak, which rests on the bottom, still oozing oil, like the Arizona at Pearl Harbor. Every year, Royal Navy divers place a new White Ensign on the stern of this war memorial. After the sinking, the surrounding islets were connected by the Churchill Barriers: huge blocks of granite barring entry except through defended passages.

Near Fort William at Spean Bridge, in a rugged glen where hawks soar, is an impressive monument to the Commando units, raised by Churchill to raid Europe when the Germans seemed unbeatable. (WSC to Mountbatten: “Everyone is thinking defensively, you are to think offensively, and pray inform me at what time we may expect to reestablish a lodgment on the continent.”) Farther south, at Strachur on the Kintyre Peninsula, is Creggans Inn, established by WSC’s friends Sir Fitzroy and Lady Veronica Maclean, still carrying on their tradition of fine Scottish cuisine.

We drove to Strachur on a lovely single-track road through Glen Orchy. Saturday it was back to Edinburgh over the A811, which offers magnificent scenery and no traffic to speak of from Loch Lomond to Stirling.

I really do find driving in Scotland as much fun as it was thirty years ago. (England, sadly, is now just one big traffic jam.) Also, there’s a wider choice of whisky. Jura Superstition is the best malt I ever tasted, but I’m biased because I’ve been twice to Jura, where Orwell, no doubt nursing the odd dram, wrote 1984.

Never give up on the Scots. Over long years, Scotland has been with us, do or die, and the outrage expressed over the terrorist’s release was as great there as anywhere.
By way of addenda to *Finest Hour* 143 (“Guarding Greatness,” page 32) we reprint the photo of Sir Winston with his Series 1 Land Rover UKE80, which we speculated was the one from which he alighted to despatch the rabbit in Ronald Golding’s time (1946-48) as his bodyguard. Not so….this was a later Land Rover, which arrived in 1954.

Our publisher scoured the web to learn that this is the bronze green Land Rover presented to Churchill at Chartwell on his eightieth birthday in 1954. The presenters were Rover’s Bob Hudson (Technical Sales Department), Geoffrey Lloyd Dixon (Sales and Service Director), and Col. Maitland (Caffyns, Rover’s Kent distributors). A model of this special Land Rover exists, and copies may be found on eBay.

The registration number UKE80 allegedly stood for “United Kingdom, Empire” and eighty years. In December 1999, a colleague of Hudson recalled that when he suggested finding some rough terrain to demonstrate where the Land Rover was able to go, “Sir Winston’s response was that he wanted to see terrain where it couldn’t go.”

Fourteen years later, farmer Frank Quay of St. Mary Cray, Kent, bought the battered Land Rover for £320, and discovered its provenance while reading the log book. UKE80 has since been restored and turns up occasionally in classic car articles. It is one of 218,327 Series 1 Land Rovers produced between 1948 and 1958. Churchill’s was furnished without the often-seen hard top, in pick-up truck configuration. It must have been ideal for navigating the damp grounds down by Chartwell’s ponds.

**TCC WINS ANOTHER NEH EDUCATION GRANT**

**WASHINGTON, AUGUST 10TH** — For the third time, the National Endowment for the Humanities has awarded The Churchill Centre a significant grant to support the participation of American teachers in a summer institute to study Winston S. Churchill. In summer 2010, twenty-four teachers will receive NEH stipends to spend two weeks at The Churchill Archives Centre at Churchill College, Cambridge, and one week in London, exploring the institute’s theme, “Winston Churchill and the Anglo-American Relationship.” Professor James W. Muller, chairman of The Churchill Centre’s Board of Academic Advisers, will direct the institute in collaboration with Allen Packwood, Director of the Churchill Archives Centre.

All Churchillians owe a debt to Professor Muller, chief operating officer Dan Myers, education programs coordinator Suzanne Sigman, and the many writers of supporting letters, for the hundreds of hours of work that went into this successful grant application.

The three-week program, from July 11th through 31st, includes extensive reading, research using primary documents in the Churchill Archives, seminars with Churchill scholars and visits to important Churchill sites, including Bletchley Park, Blenheim, Palace, the Churchill gravesite at Bladon, Harrow School, Chartwell and the Churchill Museum at the Cabinet War Rooms. The group will also tour Parliament, as in 2008. Churchill scholars Kevin Theakston, Piers Brendon and David Dilks, among others, will lead teachers in their inquiries into various aspects of Churchill’s life, with a focus on the Anglo-American relationship surrounding the Second World War.

Teachers will be selected through a competitive application process that includes a resume and two letters of reference. Perhaps the most important part of the application is the essay that should include any personal and academic information that is relevant: the reasons for applying to this institute; interest, both intellectual and personal, in Winston Churchill and the broader implications of his career and relationship with the United States; teachers’ qualifications to do the work of this institute and to make a contribution to it; what teachers hope to accomplish by participation, including any individual research and writing; and the relation of the study to one’s teaching. The essay should be no longer than 1250 words or five double-spaced pages.

Applications will be due on 1 March 2010. Complete details of the
Visitors should look at the offices at Rooms except during the worst bombing. (2007, 2008 or 2009).

LADY SOAMES IN DENMARK
COPENHAGEN, SEPTEMBER 1ST— Churchill Centre Patron Lady Soames will open the first Danish exhibition of paintings by her father at Sophienholm, near Copenhagen. Organizers hope to hold the exhibition, entitled “The Painter: Winston Churchill,” in 2010. The principal feature will be over thirty Churchill paintings, some provided by Lady Soames. In addition, the exhibition will contain many documents and photos about Churchill’s life and his love of painting. Benedicte Bojesen is the curator at Sophienholm (http://www.sophienholm.dk/side.asp?ID=50), and Churchill Centre member Niels Bjerre will oversee the documentary part of the exhibition.

DON’T MENTION THE WAR
LOS ANGELES, JULY 6TH—Writing in the LA Times (“Obama’s Strategic Blind Spot”), Professor Andrew Bacevich considered the war in Afghanistan against Churchill’s experience in World War I. Churchill, he wrote, looked for alternatives to “sending our armies to chew barbed wire in Flanders,” just as NATO should be looking for alternatives to chewing dust in Afghanistan.

Churchill’s alternative, Bacevich continued, was to launch “an amphibious assault against the Dardanelles” (a physical impossibility; what Churchill championed was a naval attack on the Dardanelles, followed by an amphibious assault on the Gallipoli Peninsula), and to “support the infantry with tanks.” (Presumably he means tanks on the Western Front, since they were not a factor on Gallipoli.)

But the Dardanelles/Gallipoli strategy, Bacevich continued, “prolonged the war and drove up its cost….Churchill and his Cabinet colleagues had spent four years dodging fundamental questions. Fixated with tactical and operational concerns, they ignored strategy and politics. Britain’s true interest lay in ending the war, not in blindly seeing it through to the bitter end. This, few British leaders possessed the imagination to see. A comparable failure of imagination besets present-day Washington.”

Bacevich writes thoughtfully. At minimum, a people who opt for war, like other government enterprises, should pay the bills, rather than foist the debt onto their grandchildren. But his Churchill examples are not entirely comparable.

First—with no disrespect to those who have died—to equate the butchery of World War I trench warfare with the relatively low casualities of Afghanistan-Iraq is preposterous. Every village in Britain, Alistair Cooke once reminded us, has its memorial to the Great War dead—to say they were decimated is perhaps an understatement since in many cases the losses were greater than one in ten.

Second, Churchill’s Dardanelles adventure was an attempt to shorten World War I—and might have, had it succeeded. The premise was that the Fleet, which hoped to sail through the Dardanelles to Constantinople (Istanbul), would cow Turkey into surrender and relieve the bottled-up Russians, redoubling the forces deployed in the east against Germany and Austria-Hungary. Churchill’s failure (as he later admitted) was trying to drive a major wartime operation without plenary authority to direct every aspect of it—something he avoided in World War II.

Third, the tank (which Bacevich rightly identified as a Churchill concept) was never a factor early in World War I. Tanks were not used significantly until 1917, and then only briefly, though they did ease the horrific carnage of “over the top” charges against entrenched artillery—the salient feature that (fourth) made World War I much worse in terms of human losses than World War II.

Churchill drew many more appropriate lessons applicable to the present war in Afghanistan, notably about the features of the terrain and the determination of the enemy, in his first book, The Story of the Malakand Field Force. He also wrote presciently about the nature of Islam, concluding that no people were braver in battle, or more easily misled by religious fanatics. The Middle East, he remarked in 1921, was unduly >>
stocked “with peppery, pugnacious, proud politicians and theologians, who happen to be at the same time extremely well armed and extremely hard up.”

BUCKLEY ON CHURCHILL

JULY 15TH— Charles Crist writes: “In his new book, Right Time, Right Place: Coming of Age with William F. Buckley Jr. and the Conservative Movement, Richard Brookhiser asserts that Buckley disliked Sir Winston. I queried Brookhiser who replied: ‘WFB’s obit for Churchill in NR was notably grudging, and reflected I think his youthful America First convictions.’ As these two men are my only heroes living or dead, I was disappointed to read such an assertion from someone who apparently knew Buckley very well.”

Mr. Brookhiser is accurate, but likely not dispositive. Buckley’s attitude to Churchill almost certainly mellowed over time, and we think The Churchill Centre had a minor role in this.

We wanted Buckley (and Arthur Schlesinger) as keynote speakers a long time before we got them, at our 1995 Boston conference. We first approached Bill Rusher, former publisher of National Review, who had spoken to us earlier.*

“You have to remember,” Rusher warned, “that the Buckleys were all America Firsters before the war, not to mention Irish—not natural allies of Churchill.”

He admitted that he’d often had debates with WFB on the subject. (Rusher’s college roommate was Henry Anatole Grunwald, who produced the superb American Heritage documentary, Churchill: The Life Triumphant, in 1965. If you don’t have it, get one.)

Buckley’s antipathy probably preceded the America First movement (which, in the late 1930s, argued for America keeping out of the Hitler war). As a boy, his father sent Bill to boarding school in England, which he hated, especially the upper class masters who looked down their noses at Yanks. He got even, so to speak, in his first novel, Saving the Queen, through his fictional hero, Bradford Oakes, who, like Bill, was whipped by his English Headmaster—“courtesy of Great Britain, Sir.” Thus Saving the Queen finds Oakes getting to know the fictional Queen Caroline in the biblical sense—“courtesy of the United States, Ma’am.” Very droll...

National Review once referred to Churchill as a “peacetime catastrophe,” which from Bill’s standpoint (not rolling back Labour socialism, campaigning for a “settlement” with the Soviets) he was. At our 1995 conference we ended his talk with questions. One of us quoted the “peacetime catastrophe” line and asked whether he had reconsidered. Bill amusingly replied: “I have often been asked to reconsider my judgments, but try as I might I have never found any reason to cause me to do so.”

But his great speech on that occasion caused us to think that he had by now taken a longer view, considering Churchill indispensable in the battle with Hitler, if not effective in later battles against socialism and the Soviets:

Mr. Churchill had struggled to diminish totalitarian rule in Europe which, however, increased. He fought to save the Empire, which dissolved. He fought socialism, which prevailed. He struggled to defeat Hitler, and he won. It is not, I think, the significance of that victory, mighty and glorious though it was, that causes the name of Churchill to make the blood run a little faster...it is the roar that we hear, when we pronounce his name. It is simply mistaken that battles are necessarily more important than the words that summon men to arms, or who remember the call to arms. The battle of Agincourt was long forgotten as a geopolitical event, but the words of Henry V, with Shakespeare to recall them, are imperishable in the mind, even as which side won the battle of Gettysburg will dim from the memory of those who will never forget the words spoken about that battle by Abraham Lincoln. The genius of Churchill was his union of affinities of the heart and of the mind, the total fusion of animal and spiritual energy...It is my proposal that Churchill’s words were indispensable to the benediction of that hour, which we hail here tonight, as we hail the memory of the man who spoke them; as we come together, to praise a famous man.”

In fairness it should also be said that Bill considered Stalin a more virulent disease than Hitler: “My thought has always been that Nazism had absolutely no eschatology, and would wither on the vine. Only the life of Hitler kept it going, and I can’t imagine he’d have lasted very long. The Communists hung in there for forty-six years.” Not everyone would agree with that.—RML

ERRATA, FINEST HOUR 142

• Editor’s gaffe: On pages 5 (four paragraphs from end) and 8 (above the “Cherie” report). For “factoid” read “fact.” Sorry! (“Factoid” means, not a trivial fact, but “an assumption repeated so often that it becomes fact.”)


• Page 62, column 3, line 2: the website given for the he-man club is incorrect. The correct location is: http://www.he-manwomansuclub.net.

RON CYNEWULF ROBBINS
1915-2009

VICTORIA, B.C., MARCH 9TH— I knew Ron Robbins only by letter or over the phone, but on countless occasions for twenty years I was glad to have him there. Ron had observed Churchill as a young reporter in the House of Commons, and knew him with an intimate appreciation that was never diminished by firsthand experience. Ron was Old School, possessing neither computer nor cell phone. He preferred to send fastidiously typed

**William F. Buckley’s entire speech can be found in Churchill Proceedings 1995-1996; in the Buckley collected speeches, Let Us Talk of Many Things; and on our website, at http://xrl.us/bfakae.
contributions, now and then corrected with White-Out. For that reason, when
FH senior editors began to communicate frequently by email, we bumped him to
Editor Emeritus, and he did us the honor to accept.

He was a dear friend, and even
though he made it to 93, it is very sad to
know those contributions must now end,
though a couple are on file and remain to
be published. His generosity to the maga-
zine was profound, his praise of its editor
deeply encouraging. Herewith by kind
permission of the *Globe and Mail*,
secured through the efforts of Terry
Reardon of ICS Canada, a report by
someone who knew him well.

**JOURNALIST AND POET**

**NICK RUSSELL**

Who knew he was a prize-winning
swimmer, or a Royal Navy veteran and
survivor of a prisoner-of-war camp? Or a
poet and a novelist? Robbie Robbins was
a tough and competitive journalist, and
later the founder of a journalism school,
but his past lives were intensely private.
Even those who knew him well were
rarely able to draw him out.

If pressed he might admit that he
was born on a Welsh sheep farm and that
his first news story was published in a
Welsh daily when he was 9. (He was still
writing when he was 90.) After school,
he moved to Hertfordshire, became a
correspondent for *The Times*, then joined
British United Press on Fleet Street. He
loved the urgency of reporting and the
drama of watching news unfold, and
developed a life-long admiration for Sir
Winston Churchill from covering his
speeches in the House of Commons.

Robbie volunteered early for the
Royal Navy. He told me his 1955 novel,
*Blood for Breakfast*, was closely based on
his own experience. Certainly his stray
references in conversation to the Nazis
sinking his ship, his capture, the
attempted “mutiny” and subsequent trial
for “treason,” his years in POW camp
and a 200-mile forced march across
Upper Silesia, all occur in the book. He
refused to dwell on the hell of Stalag
XXB, preferring to recall creating a secret
camp newspaper, *News from Nowhere*,
typed on a Nazi typewriter while offi-
cially recording 3000 names for the Red
Cross. News items were gathered via a
radio stolen from a freight train and
hidden in the latrines, which were so
filthy, he would gleefully say, that the
Germans never ventured there.

After the war, he worked for the
Press Association and the BBC. In about
1952, he emigrated to Canada with Kay,
whom he met in school and to whom he
was married for forty-seven years, and

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**AROUND & ABOUT**

**DENNIS BERMAN** in the *Wall Street Journal* wrote:

> As Churchill might put it, GMAC is a financial
> black hole stuffed into a governance black box.”

**JONATHAN HAYES** writes: “He couldn’t have stretched or
twisted that one much more! Poor Sir Winston—the things said in his name.”

From **EARL BAKER**, heard on Philadelphia radio station: English composer
William Walton was honored to be asked to provide music for the 1953
Coronation. After his piece was first heard in practice he wrote a friend: “The
Royal Family seems to like it, and we hope He approves as well.” It was
unclear to the friend whether the capitalized “He” was the Deity or Churchill.

**DAVID BOLER** sent us this from David Niven’s autobiography, *The
Moon’s a Balloon*. Niven and his first wife Primmie were frequently
invited to *Ditchley* by the Ronald Trees, whom they knew socially. The
Trees also hosted Churchill when the moon was high and Chequers
vulnerable to air attack. Niven met Churchill there several times, and on
more than one occasion walked round the walled garden with the Prime
Minister. Recalling an evening in 1941, Niven wrote:

> “Churchill bade me take another walk....’Do you think, sir,’ I asked,
> ‘that the Americans will ever come into the war?’ He fixed me with that
> rather intimidating gaze and unloosed the famous jaw-jutting bulldog
growl. ‘Mark my words—something cataclysmic will occur!’ Four weeks
> later the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

> “Months later, when we were once more at Ditchley, I asked if the
> Prime Minister remembered what he had said so long ago. His reply
gave me goose pimples.

> “Certainly I remember.’

> “What made you say it, sir?’

> “Because, young man, I study history.”

In “Action This Day” in *Finest Hour* 25, Summer 1972, editor Dal
Newfield published another excerpt from *The Moon’s a Balloon*:

> “Guy Gibson, the master bomber, spent a weekend with us just
> after he had been awarded the Victoria Cross for blowing up the Eder
> and Mohne dams. He was in a rare state of excitement because
> Winston Churchill had invited him to dinner at *Ten Downing Street*
> on the Monday. Guy made a date with us for luncheon at one o’clock on
> the following day so he could report everything the great man said. Primmie
> and I were at the Berkeley sharp at one. No Gibson. Two o’clock. No
> Gibson. We were just finishing our ersatz coffee around three o’clock
> when he came tottering in, looking ghastly.

> “How was it?” we asked.

> “Marvelous! Fabulous!’ he croaked. ‘God! I’m tired. That was the
> best yet!’

> “What did he say?’

> “Who?’ said Gibson.

> “Churchill,’ I said with a touch of asperity.

> “Gibson looked stricken, then he clutched his head.

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RON ROBBINS... joined the Canadian Press in Toronto and then the CBC International Service in Montreal. With the explosive postwar growth of TV news, he moved to CBC National News in Toronto, eventually becoming national news director. Robbie helped build a young TV news operation into a goliath known for breaking stories and for outstanding election coverage.

After twenty-five years with TV news he retired, and was quickly head-hunted by the University of Regina to found a new journalism school. He rose to the challenge with fierce energy and commitment, designing classes, hiring teachers, setting up scholarships, chairs and internships, and harassing people from coast to coast for donations. The result was a small but respected school that made a significant impact, particularly to Prairie newsrooms.

As a youth, the feisty little Welshman with the amazing eyebrows was a prize-winning swimmer, and kept swimming into his 80s. He and Kay were keen tennis players, and played into their 70s. But perhaps they were happiest fishing together: Robbie once boasted they had caught fish in every Canadian province! He was bereft when she died fifteen years ago.

He disliked cars and I believe he never drove, but despite his war experience he loved the sea—swimming, fishing, sailing—and lived within yards of it in Victoria. As he wrote in a poem titled Land-Locked, "If I can but die within sight of the sea, That old dog—of it in Victoria. As he wrote in a poem titled Land-Locked, "If I can but die within sight of the sea, That old dog—"

Ron Robbins in Finest Hour

In Ron’s memory, webmaster John Olsen has posted all these on our website:

- Sir William Stephenson: “This One Is Dear to My Heart” FH 67, 2nd Qtr., 1990.
- Unserving Resolution, Glinting Intellect, FH 97, Winter 1997-98.
- Churchill as Artist, FH 100, Autumn 1998.
- Operation Sea Lion, FH 134, Spring 2007.

Articles filed:


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FINEST HOUR 144 / 10
A One must consider that in the context. I think there are three points to ponder.

1. Churchill came into Parliament in 1900 under a Prime Minister who openly opposed the principle of consent of the governed and was a candid friend of aristocratic power, that is, power to the well-born. Churchill opposed that. It is dramatic how strongly he did it. He did it in the name of his father, but for other, larger reasons also.

2. Churchill identified, over and over, socialism to be the worst problem in British politics: the worst domestic danger, a form of the danger that overcame Russia and Germany. This he said early and late. He thought socialism unfit to be the Opposition in a free country. He thought Britain vulnerable to socialism because of its class system.

3. True enough, Churchill sought a middle way. But that cannot be understood as a compromise between two mutual exclusives, especially because he opposed both mutual exclusives. It is like trying to find a middle way on the question of slavery. As Lincoln said, trying to find a man half-slave and half-free is like trying to find a man who is neither living nor dead.

What was Churchill for, then? He was for some way of healing or bridging the class distinctions and providing security for the working class, so that they would not expropriate the wealth of the holders of capital; so they would have a fair chance for themselves.

Churchill’s essay about the Upton Sinclair novel in 19061 is interesting in this regard, as are similar things he said before that. It is implicit in his support of Free Trade over preferences, which was for him a political and a class matter much more than an economic matter. It can be read in his essay about Roosevelt in 19342 and his essay on constitutionalism in 1936.3 He sees the problem of bureaucracy, and of excess by the majority, very clearly from an early day. The problem is more mature now than it was in his time. That is why it is easy for some of Churchill’s solutions to look leftist from our modern vantage point.

Churchill was a political thinker. He understood that the first division in politics is between the very rich and the very poor. He looked for a way to ameliorate that division, and to make the society stable. The United States provided a model for much of this.

Churchill was, then, pursuing justice, the arrangement of goods, offices, and honors according to the merit of those receiving them, and the interest of the State. He was profoundly for a liberal society, in which the economy is driven by private enterprise, and in which money is allowed to “fructify,” as he quoted John Morley, in the pockets of people. The modern world, the world that requires freedom of religion and limited government, can abide no other kind of politics. But this kind of politics is demonstrably vulnerable to war. It is also vulnerable domestically.

If a disaffected majority, necessarily made up of the many who are poor, or relatively poor, expropriate the wealth of the few, it is a tragedy that will destroy justice in the state—even if the poor have a grievance against the rich. Churchill was trying to prevent that. How? There one must understand what he meant by “Constitutionalism.” For Churchill, this is a very rich subject, rather like the writings of James Madison.

Larry P. Arnn, President
Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, Michigan

Footnotes

Any reader desiring the text of these essays may email the editor.


Q Can you tell me who Churchill’s personal hero was?

A It is very risky for someone who never knew him to venture an answer to that, but on the strength of his own remarks I’d say it was his father, Lord Randolph Churchill (1849-1895). Napoleon was a favorite character out of history, but in 1947, when asked by his daughter Sarah who he would most like in an empty chair opposite, he said immediately, “Oh, my father, of course.” Later he wrote a short story about the imagined return of his father, and their ensuing conversation. Search our website for “The Dream.”

Q Did Churchill ever visit Somalia?

A We were certain he never did, but were wrong: He visited the port of Berbera, Somaliland, by ship on his 1907 African journey. Indeed his arrival at Mombasa, for the start of his travels in Africa, was delayed three days because of his diversion to Berbera.

To his mother from HMS Venus on 19 October 1907, Churchill wrote: “I have availed myself of this to include Berbera, Somaliland, in my tour. We shall reach Aden tonight and tomorrow we have to coal there. During the night of the 20th we shall cross the Gulf and I shall spend I think two days looking into the affairs of the Somaliland Protectorate upon which we spend £76,000 a year with uncommonly little return.”

In 1910 as Home Secretary he wrote the King: “The vote of £96,000 extra for the Somaliland Protectorate gave rise to a languid discussion. General Manning is seeking to execute [the withdrawal] from our advanced posts in the interior and holding the coastal towns of Berbera, Bulhar and Seila.”

All subsequent references to Somaliland occur in World War II. §
125 YEARS AGO

Autumn, 1884 • Age 9
“I should like to be with you on that beautiful ship”

W hile Winston enjoyed his years in Brighton more than his time at St. George’s, it was not immediately apparent in his grades for the fall term: he finished at the very bottom of his class in mathematics, English and French, and close to the bottom in conduct. Nevertheless, he wrote his mother on 28 October: “I am quite happy here.”

On the 3rd of December, Lord Randolph left on a four-month journey to India in preparation for being named Secretary of State for India in the next Tory government. His family saw him off. Winston wrote to him two days later: “I should like to be with you on that beautiful ship”; and to his mother the day after: “I wrote to Papa yesterday. The Holidays begin on the 19th so there are not many more days before I shall come home. Will you send me Everest’s address. The examinations have begun. Now I must say good-bye with love and kisses....”

100 YEARS AGO

Autumn, 1909 • Age 34
“I will never love any woman in the world but you”

C hurchill visited Germany early in the autumn, at the Kaiser’s invitation, to observe German Army maneuvers. Upon his return, he went to Dundee to attend to constituency matters while Clemmie took their new daughter Diana for several weeks in October to the Crest Hotel in Sussex. While there Winston wrote to her on 17 October, passing on a choice piece of gossip about H. G. Wells and his new novel about free love:

You must read Wells’ new book, *Ann Veronica*. Massingham tells me (this is most secret) that Wells has been behaving very badly with a young Girton girl of the new emancipated school—and that very serious consequences have followed.

Clemmie replied the next day:

Your gossip about Wells is very exciting—I long to confide it to Hodgy Podgy [Diana’s nurse] but restrain myself. Perhaps she will be called in to succour the poor Girton girl. I thought that Institution turned out only stern & masculine specimens.

Churchill’s deep and romantic love for his wife during this time is reflected in a letter to her on 25 October, quoted only in Martin Gilbert’s *Churchill: A Life*. “I would like so much to take you to my arms all cold & gleaming from your bath.” In light of that plainly amorous passage and Winston’s lifelong fidelity his letter of 10 November is surprising, replying to what appears to be a case of unwarranted suspicions by her:

Dearest it worries me very much that you should seem to nurse such absolutely wild suspicions....I could not conceive my self forming any other attachment than that to which I have fastened the happiness of my life here below. And it offends my best nature that you should—against your true instinct—indulge small emotions & wounding doubts. You ought to trust me for I do not love & will never love any woman in the world but you....

Mary Soames wrote in her collection of her parents’ letters that she showed this letter to her mother fifty years later who did not recall what had prompted it.

A general election campaign began in December when the House of Lords took the constitutionally unprecedented step of rejecting the House of Commons budget. Churchill was one of the most prominent Liberal speakers:

The House of Lords have struck a hard blow for the aggrandisement of their own privileges, committed an act of unscrupulous party warfare outside of the wide limitations of their constitutional rights....

Well, then, you must remember that the House of Lords have very lately made a public-spirited offer of the highest importance. They have offered to take over the whole business of governing the country.

(Laughter.) They have offered to save us the trouble and the worry and the vexation and the anxiety of governing ourselves. The only thing they do not offer to take over is the expense. (Cheers.) But everything else is to be done for us. We put the penny in the slot; they do the rest....

Mr. Balfour says that a single chamber is impossible in finance. This is the same Mr. Balfour who only a year ago at Dumfries said, “It is the House of Commons and not the House of Lords which settles uncontrolled our financial system.” There is one of the flattest, nakedest contradiction in terms which has ever been recorded of the leader of a great party.

Now I come to the third great argument of Lord Curzon. “All civilisation,” he said...has been the work of aristocracies.” (Laughter.) They liked that in Oldham.

(Laughter.) There was not a duke, not an earl, not a marquis, not a viscount in Oldham who did not feel that a compliment had been paid to him.
outside a madhouse wished to do so. But how would it help us if we were attacked or invaded ourselves? That is the question we have to ask.

Earlier in November, Churchill had met with Mira Slade, who had spent much time in India. Churchill told her that while he opposed Gandhi from a political standpoint, he had “the greatest admiration for his work in the moral and social uplift of his people.” When he left, Churchill asked her to “take Mr. Gandhi my kind regards and tell him I should have liked to have seen him at the time of the Round Table Conference.”

On four separate dates in November, Churchill’s devotion to individual liberty was on display when he opposed a government gambling bill which legalized gambling on dog racing and football but prohibited participating in national sweepstakes. Churchill was appalled at the hypocrisy of “setting up hundreds of casinos for dog racing” while providing fines and imprisonment for those guilty people who break the law by participating in a national Derby sweepstake, i.e., the Irish Sweepstakes. Even more hypocritical, in Churchill’s eyes, was the fact that it was class legislation of the most objectionable character [because] [r]ich people have not the slightest difficulty in gambling to their heart’s content. The provisions of the Bill make it perfectly clear that the Carlton Club, and, I dare say, the National Liberal Club… will have every facility to conduct their [own] sweeps.

But worst of all, according to Churchill, was the violation of individual liberty which would follow the Bill’s passage, specifically (1) the “censorship of the Press,” who would be prohibited from publishing lists of winners of the Irish Sweepstakes; (2) violation of “the doctrine that an Englishman’s home is an Englishman’s castle” by permitting police to enter private dwellings “looking through everything that is there” in search of contraband sweepstakes tickets; and (3) the “almost continuous rummaging of His Majesty’s mail… tamper(ing) with the privacy of the corres-

75 years ago
Autumn, 1934 • Age 59
“First requisite of peace”

During the last week in September and the first three weeks of October, Winston and Clemmie were guests of their friend Lord Moyne on his yacht Rosaura for a cruise in the Mediterranean visiting Athens, Cyprus, Turkey, Beirut, Damascus, Nazareth, Jerusalem, Amman, Akaba, Cairo and Alexandria.

On 16 November, Churchill gave a speech broadcast by the BBC on the causes of war in which, among other things, he suggested armaments per se were not to blame:

But history shows on many a page that armaments are not necessarily a cause of war and that the want of them is no guarantee of peace….Indeed the lucid intervals of peace and order only occur in human history after armaments have come into being. And civilisation has been nursed only in cradles guarded by superior weapons and discipline.

He also said that dwelling on the horror of war would not prevent it:

Many people think that the best way to escape war is to dwell upon its horrors, and to imprint them vividly upon the minds of the younger generation. They haunt the grisly photographs before their eyes. They fill their ears with tales of carnage….All this teaching ought to be very useful in preventing us from attacking or invading any other country, if anyone

The Government was seeking the support of the Labour Party for the Bill and at one point, Churchill directed his comments to the Opposition. “I put it to the Leader of the Opposition who all his life has fought for liberty” he said “that they owe it to themselves and their movement, in view of what is taking place all over the world, to be particularly careful, on all questions which arise, to preserve the liberty of the individual.” Speaking to the Government bench, he said “You have lost your sense of proportion.” As with his warnings on German rearmament, few were listening and the Bill passed.

50 years ago
Autumn, 1959 • Age 84
“I will trust the citizens do not bear me any ill will”

On the eve of his 85th birthday Churchill’s campaign for re-election continued as a general election was scheduled for October. After speaking at Woodford on 29 September, he then spoke on 6 October at Walthamstow on behalf of the Conservative MP John Harvey. Three days later Churchill was reelected for the ninth consecutive time since 1924. It was to be his last term in Parliament.

German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer visited Churchill at his home in Hyde Park Gate on 18 November where they talked about world affairs and Adenauer’s distrust of Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev. For his birthday, Adenauer sent Churchill a print of Bonn which had been under siege by John Churchill, First Duke of Marlborough.

Churchill replied in a thank-you letter, “I trust the citizens do not bear me any inherited ill will!” with no apparent sense of irony that, Bonn having been the target, along with all other German cities, of intensive Allied bombing during the war, any ill-will borne by its citizens toward him would have had a more recent cause than his ancestor’s siege of the city.
To express in the space of a few pages the versatile character and the strange magnetic charms of him who has taken so high a place in so short a space of time is an arduous and may be reckoned in me a presumptuous task. As I have had the honour and happiness of enjoying his acquaintance during the most active part of his career, as the fascination which his society exercised over me quickened my observation and recollection to an unusual degree, I have spared no pains to discover whatever might help me to learn the secret of his success. I flatter myself that few biographers have embarked upon their task with more advantages, certainly none with greater sympathies.

Compare the opening sentences of James Boswell’s famous biography of Samuel Johnson: “To write the Life of him who excelled all mankind in writing the lives of others, and who, whether we consider his extraordinary endowments, or his various works, has been equalled by few in any age, is an arduous and may be reckoned in me a presumptuous task.”

Before I won the privilege of seeing Mr. Winston Churchill, I confess that rumour and the chatter of newspapers did not at once predispose me in his favour. But some of his speeches in 1901 aroused my interest by their energetic protests against the tyranny of the political machine (see the first question and answer on page 11 — Ed.) and I was moved to desire his acquaintance.

I confess it was with a monstrous curiosity that I presented myself at his door, wondering what comparison I should have to make between him and his father, who had lavished many and great kindnesses upon me during as well as after the days of the old Fourth Party.* A comparison between that distinguished statesman and his still more brilliant son—patre pulchro filius pulchrior

Herbert Vivian (1865-1940) wrote prolifically on politics, travel and war for half a century, and lived to see Churchill reach the summit he had predicted for him. Vivian published this remarkable glimpse of Churchill’s character and oratory anonymously in his book, Myself Not Least: Being the Personal Reminiscences of “X” (New York: Henry Holt, 1923; London: Thornton Butterworth, 1925), when it was nearly a quarter century old. Our late cuttings editor, John Frost, found the original, with the author identified, in Pall Mall for April 1905.

*The “Fourth Party” was a nickname for young Tory bloods, led by Lord Randolph, bidding to make the Conservative Party more populist.
—would be invidious: but this much I may assert, after careful observation of both, that Mr. Churchill has inherited many rare qualities from Lord Randolph, while he has added many others no less necessary to permanent success in the political arena. It is no exaggeration to say that since Mr. Gladstone, perhaps even since Mr. Pitt, there has been no more thorough parliamentarian.

Humour with a Religious Instinct

Many readers of his works must often have asked themselves how he contrived to call into being so lucid and convincing a literary style. Harrow and Sandhurst, the rough and tumble of a subaltern’s life, hairbreadth escapes in South Africa, the Sudan and the Indies, though a sufficient training for practical life, do not usually form the particular type of mind necessary to a stylist. Moreover, he is an outdoor man, who finds his greatest pleasures in hunting and polo, and few outdoor men breathe comfortably in a library. But Disraeli, as usual, has a solution for the problem when he tells us that Nature is stronger than Education.

Mr. Churchill has certainly inherited his father’s surprising quickness of assimilation. He can master most subjects while others are groping at the gate of the avenue; he can imbibe an atmosphere as others toss off a brandy-peg. And in literature the atmosphere is the thing. He has created his own, but a careful student of his works may detect a flavour of the gases of Macaulay, an aroma of the intoxicating ozone of Disraeli. He has confessed to me his admiration for the form of their writings.

“When a man reads Macaulay,” said he, “the attention is not taken by the praise or blame so much as by the persistent effect of innumerable small touches. When the picture of one of Macaulay’s characters is complete you can scarcely help yourself, but are irresistibly driven to admire without reservation or to loathe with the fullest detestation. If, then, you desire to convey an impression of perfection or turpitude, do not proclaim your own opinion, but spread out your fact, elaborate your details, return to the charge and inflict the same wounds upon a different part. Thus, and thus only, can you make sure of convincing the obstinate.”

He had not spoken many words before I was mightily impressed by a strong personal resemblance to his father, which had entirely escaped me at the outset. It was his speech which betrayed him. I noted in a moment the peculiar intonation, not to be described as a lisp, which I had not heard since the occasion of my last conversation with Lord Randolph. I detected from time to time the same gestures, the same mannerisms, the same sense of humour; but the laugh was different.

He has a laugh unlike that of any one else—so infectious and so full of hilarity that none may refuse to partake of it. I have seen him share in the merriment aroused by one of his quips at a public meeting, and the audience has been spurred on to chew the cud of his humour; but when he enjoys a joke in private he is much more free from restraint, and the infection is instantaneous. Mr. Churchill’s laughter introduces us frankly to the devil-may-care, boyish, hang-it-all, honest, reckless side of his character. Anything for a joke, it seems to say; and in an age of demure, calculating, irresponsible persons, it is an unalloyed delight to find some one who will let himself go.

Few probably possess so large a sense of humour, so frank an entrance even into jokes which might at first sight appear to tell against himself. He showed me with delight a poster which had been issued by the Transvaal Government offering a reward of £25 for his capture after he escaped from Pretoria. I remarked upon the strange experience of having a price set upon his head.

“Yes,” he replied; “but what a miserably small price. I have been in gaol, I have been a fugitive from justice, and all that was offered for my capture, dead or alive, was a paltry five-and-twenty pounds.”

He is one of the very few people who combine a sense of humour with a true religious instinct. His musings when a vulture watched him starving upon the veldt have caused thorns to crackle under many pots, but were undoubtedly inspired by those pious inspirations which underlie our national character. And his most intimate friends have always found him uncommonly reserved in the expression of his religious feelings.

But I am telling my tale too quickly. At this my first audience I was still a comparative stranger. There was little to distinguish me from the throng of solicitors who fill the antechambers of coming men. >>

"He can master most subjects while others are groping at the gate of the avenue, he can imbibe an atmosphere as others toss off a brandy-peg. And in literature, the atmosphere is the thing....My only regret about him is that Disraeli did not live long enough to be his Boswell."
The House of Commons is the graveyard of reputations. Its floor is strewn with the corpses of reputationists...[It] is the great leveler. To win its heart may not require the highest attainments or the noblest enthusiasms, but it pricks every bubble, it shatters every sham. Indeed the most successful demagogues have often proved the most abject failures when they rose to address Mr. Speaker.

HERBERT VIVIAN, 1905...

VIVIAN: “I seek your advice and help in order to make my way into Parliament.”

CHURCHILL (surveying me thoughtfully, with his chin upon his hand): “How old are you? [Then, when I had told him:] Why have you waited so long?”

This was a palpable hit. I murmured something about the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. I went on to say that I desired to stand as an independent candidate who hoped to support his policy.

CHURCHILL: “This is the age of the party machine. Unless you belong to one or another of the recognised parties you will not in 999 cases out of 1000 stand the ghost of a chance. The party machine is very strong. Of course nothing is impossible, but unless you have very active local influences behind you, it must take you years and years to build up a party which will carry you through. And even when you are elected, you may find yourself a mere unit, buffeted by a torrent or floating helplessly upon a stream. Men come to the House of Commons [this he said with solemnity and some feeling] full of self-confidence, with hopes, with ambition, even with high reputations which they have acquired outside.

“But the House of Commons is the graveyard of reputations. Its floor is strewn with the corpses of reputationists—there is, perhaps, no sadder sight than the quick death which is meted out there to careers which have carried everything before them in the country. The House of Commons [he went on in a lighter vein] is the great leveller. To win its heart may not require the highest attainments or the noblest enthusiasms, but it pricks every bubble, it shatters every sham. The way to get on there is not to be a great orator, who has at his command those glowing periods which the populace can never resist. Indeed, the most successful demagogues have often proved the most abject failures when they rose to address Mr. Speaker. The only short cut to the ear of the House is sober common sense, a businesslike way of saying the right thing at the right moment, and a resolute avoidance of claptrap or gush.”

After this conversation, I saw him frequently and at short intervals. He was never twice in precisely the same mood, but always agreeable, amusing and encouraging. One day, when I was with a friend in the strangers’ tea-room of the House, Mr. Churchill joined us, laughing very heartily.

Before he greeted us at all, he proceeded to declaim a long passage from an article which I had just published on the subject of the Japanese. I was amazed by this feat of memory, and told him so, adding my appreciation of the compliment he paid me.

CHURCHILL: “It is delightful. If you delivered something like that as a speech in the House of Commons you would establish your right to a hearing at once. There is nothing the House likes so much as to be amused. So long as you give it something fresh and unusual, it is always satisfied.”

The Politics of Free Trade

Perhaps the conversation which remains most vivid in my mind is one which took place on the morrow after Mr. Chamberlain’s first declaration in favour of Tariff Protection. My interviews with Mr. Churchill generally took place at about eleven in the morning, and on this occasion stress of business had prevented me from giving more than a cursory glance to the newspapers.

When I reached his chambers, I found him in his dressing-room, putting the finishing touches to his toilet. “Well,” he began, “politics are becoming exciting at last.” I have a very sharp recollection of his serious, almost anxious mien. He stood before me in his shirtsleeves, twisting a long silver chain around his waist. His eyebrows were knitted in deep thought, and I could see
that he was revolving great ideas.

VIVIAN: “You mean about Chamberlain? I have not read his speech yet, but it looks as though he were going in for Protection.”

CHURCHILL (walking up and down the room in agitation): “Of course he is going for Protection. What will be the end of it all, Heaven only knows.” Then, pausing before me, he inquired, “Are you a Free Trader?”

VIVIAN: “Of course. Anyone who has had an elementary education must believe that Free Trade is the only just and reasonable policy. But whether private interests are going to prevail and make Protection a popular cry, I have no means of knowing.”

CHURCHILL: “It can never be a popular cry. It is foredoomed to failure. But it is going to be a big fight. Joe will stick at nothing to carry it through. He will use all his influence. He will bribe the landlords. Already he has offered old age pensions as a bait to the poor. He will multiply all manner of devices. But he has committed an irreparable blunder. He cannot have realised all the consequences of his action. I believe it will be the death-warrant of his career. It may sound a plausible manoeuvre for diverting attention from the blunders of his administration, and no doubt he will obtain support from many strong men, many rich men [these words he pronounced in loud, threatening tones, as though conveying a warning of the dangers which would confront opponents of the new policy].

“But he is bound to be beaten. The country will never stand a tax upon food, and without a tax upon food, protection is impossible. The masses know too well, for their fathers have told them from bitter experience, what frightful sufferings, what famine, what poverty, what starvation are the inevitable consequences of such a policy.”

VIVIAN: “Then what will you do?”

CHURCHILL: “Do! The accursed thing must be fought, it must be denounced from every platform, it must be resisted as we would resist the advent of some loathsome pestilence. [With growing excitement:] It will mean the break-up of the Unionist Party. But whose will be the fault? Whose will be the responsibility? This great iconoclast has already broken up one party; he will not shrink from destroying another.”

VIVIAN: “Then shall we have to go over to the other side?”

CHURCHILL: “Who can tell what may happen? The position is hedged in with perplexity—it bristles with difficulties. It may mean the end of their career for those who are bold enough to stand up against this powerful minister. Time alone can tell what will happen. All that can be said at present is that we are confronted by a perilous crisis in the history of our party, in the history of our country.”

I had many opportunities of discussing this important topic with him as Mr. Chamberlain’s tariff campaign developed itself. I think that at first he anticipated a larger secession of Unionist members of Parliament than actually took place. But he never wavered in his confidence that the country would unhesitatingly reject the fiscal revolution which had been so suddenly proposed.

He never swerved nor faltered, but, as time went on, he realised more and more the toughness of the fight which lay before him. It evidently enlarged his horizon and added fresh qualities to his political character. Becoming more and more independent, in emancipating himself more completely from the party machine, he acquired a self-restraint and sense of responsibility which belonged to party leaders. This development was particularly conspicuous to those who, like myself, had the privilege of sharing his platform at Birmingham and the Alexandra Palace. The meeting in the stronghold of the champion of the new doctrines was extraordinarily plucky, admirably organised, and altogether successful.

Young Winston’s Oratory

That gift is well illustrated by the nature of his oratorical gestures with every appearance of calm, holding himself perfectly upright, he makes use of his hands and arms in a very telling manner, and I have never been able to make up my mind whether his action is entirely spontaneous, or whether, like most of his other expressions, it is the offspring of profound thought.

Sometimes, in the middle of an unexpected outburst of enthusiasm, I have seen him caught in the middle of an elaborate gesture, say with his arms extended and his mouth wide open, reminding one of frozen music. But whatever happens, he is never abashed. I could almost see the next word poised on the tip of his tongue, ready to be launched at precisely the right moment. In this and, other ways, his speeches show traces of careful preparation; but so skilfully are they designed that even the most polished epigrams always seem to be spontaneous. What could be happier, for instance, than his playful retort at the Alexandra Palace?

“Some kind people have been kind enough to tell me that I ought to go over and join the Liberal Party.” From all parts of the crowded hall came exuberant shouts of “Why don’t you?”

He put his head on one side in a very comical way, and there was a droll twinkle in his eyes, which tempted me to believe that he had anticipated some such commentary. With a rollicking affection of surprise, he retorted, “That is not a bad idea.” Then after a pause and a tempest of cheering, “I will give it my best consideration.”

At Manchester one day he surprised his audience by exclaiming, “Mr. Chamberlain loves the working >>
HERBERT VIVIAN, 1905...
man!” Then in a conical stage aside, he went on, “He loves to see him work.”

Effortless Industry
Next to his versatility, Mr. Churchill’s industry must be noted as one of the prime factors in his career. Without any apparent effort he contrives to crowd into one day the work of half a dozen busy men. He will address meetings night after night in all parts of the country, sandwiching between them thoughtful speeches in the House of Commons and long tiring discussions in standing committee; meanwhile he is always ready to see any one who wishes to consult him on political matters, he deals promptly with an enormous correspondence, and keeps the press in a good humour by writing letters, answering questions, and leaving no stone unturned to hearten possible supporters.

“You must forgive me for having kept you waiting,” he said to me on one occasion, when he had arrived a few minutes late for an appointment, “for I am very much hunted today.” I will quote some of his counsels at random, as they may prove of service to others who may be engaged in the anxious task of wooing a constituency.

“Get among the people as much as you can,” said he. “They are in themselves a liberal education. You will find them kinder, more generous, more natural, more tolerant, and on the whole far quicker in their powers of observation, than those who lead a lazy life. You must expect a certain amount of rough-and-tumble, not only in their manners, but in their ideas. Yet when you come to understand them you cannot help liking them, and you cannot help trusting them.

“Make a great number of speeches. Never mind if only a score of persons are present. Treat each of them as though he were a missionary, to whom you were delivering a message which he should go forth and preach. You have no idea how large a number may be affected by the impressions you convey to a few. Also, if you are a good observer, you will learn as much by your speeches as you can hope to teach. Watch men’s faces, and endeavour to realise how much and how little they understand, what amuses and interests them, what moves them to enthusiasm, and what leaves them listless or unmoved.

“Little meetings are the best practice of all, for they are the most difficult to wake up. Besides which, each affords you an entirely different audience, so that you may permit yourself to repeat the same speech over and over again, modifying and improving it as you go along. Do not deliver ambitious orations, full of epigrams, redolent of midnight oil, when only twenty or thirty are gathered together without any reporters.

“Above all, do nothing rash. If you have unpopular opinions on topics of no immediate importance, nothing is gained and a great deal may be lost by thrusting your private judgment down unwilling throats. Be frank, but talk to people about what they want to know. After all, there are certain great issues before the country, and your business is to unite as many voters as possible on those issues. Your opponents will be quick enough to start any questions which are likely to provoke discord. Remember that you cannot afford to throw away a single vote.”

One day I gave utterance to the opinion that it must be very difficult for persons like ourselves who had uttered their thoughts with frankness for a long time both in speeches and writings, to avoid giving offence. Considering what vehement prejudices most people have on the minor matters of the law, a casual allusion may suffice to estrange some one who would otherwise be an enthusiastic and valued supporter.

CHURCHILL (smiling): “We must not exaggerate the importance of our ephemeral utterances. When I first began to make speeches, I was in a fever lest some one should haul me over the coals for a verbal or trivial contradiction. I soon found that the greater part of a speech goes in at one ear and comes out at the other. A man pays us the compliment of coming to a meeting and listening to what we have to say. But he does not study our books with a blue pencil in his hand, or paste a report of every speech in a scrapbook.”

VIVIAN: “But if there be found even one just man to bring us to repentance in this way, he may make it very awkward for us by his questions.”

CHURCHILL: “No, no! You can always silence a questioner, though it be only by a bad joke. Life would be too short if we had to set so rigid a watch upon our lips as all that. Besides which, if we were always calculating and hesitating over the precise effect, the painful consistency of every sentence, we should cease to be natural and spontaneous and therefore convincing. Never take yourself more seriously than other people do. You must not mistake the hustings for the witness-box or the confessional. It is quite enough if you are honest to yourself and state your beliefs frankly on broad, general lines. There are plenty of greater gifts and higher forms of truthfulness than meticulous consistency.”

VIVIAN: “I remember your father saying to me once, ‘never revise your speeches. If you are ever reproached with an inconvenient expression, you can always say that you have been badly reported.’”

CHURCHILL: “Besides, life would be much too short if we had to turn ourselves into amateur reporters as well. A public speaker provides the raw material for the reporter, who then manufactures it according to his ability. It lies with him to send us forth to the world as finished orators, resplendent in our gift of tongues, or as
“The accursed thing must be fought, it must be denounced from every platform, it must be resisted as we would resist the advent of some loathsome pestilence....This great iconoclast has already broken up one party, he will not shrink from destroying another....’ Churchill never wavered in his confidence that the country would unhesitatingly reject the fiscal revolution which had been so suddenly proposed.”

Money is spent right and left with that insane generosity begotten of disregard for other people’s pockets. That is a question which must not be treated as a game. We cannot afford to pass over the imminent menace of ruin as though extravagance were merely a move in the contest between the ins and the outs.”

On another occasion I mentioned to him the severe criticisms which had been passed upon me for a change of party which I did not imagine to embrace a change of principles. “Everybody changes nowadays,” he exclaimed. “Look at Balfour. I remember going to the House of Commons when I was a boy, and hearing him denounce the unconstitutional practice of closure by guillotine. I came away mightily impressed, and I thought to myself: Here at least is a statesman who will spare no effort in combating this monstrous invasion of the privileges of Parliament.

“That was when his party was in opposition. I remember also how persuasive he was in his condemnation of the principle of Irish land purchase, and yet I have seen him defending that very same principle with the same old arguments which he had proclaimed to be unworthy of notice. Believe me, the average modern politician cares very little about consistency. He produces an assortment of wares with which to tempt the public, but as soon as the interest in them has declined, he quietly sets himself to work to dress the window with still later novelties. As long as he can sell something for the votes, upon which he depends for a livelihood, he is quite content. I daresay politics are regarded by most people as a game, in which the cleverest sharper wins.

“But I confess that I really do feel angry when I observe the monstrous and cynical manner in which public personages too often regard public expenditure. In writing my father’s life, I have been greatly impressed by study of the old Budgets. There you found ministers struggling and scraping, and using all their utmost endeavours to effect savings, however apparently trivial. Now the public are regarded merely as a milch cow, from whom the utmost possible must be extracted.

stuttering exponents of bald, unconvincing common-places. You are no more responsible for a published report than you are for the success of an artist or a photographer, to whom you may have given a sitting.”

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HERBERT VIVIAN, 1905...

members make this the one resort for their hospitality—Tea on the Terrace!” He chuckled to himself.

At this point our tea arrived, and he asked the servant whether it had come from the House of Commons kitchen. Receiving an affirmative reply, he assumed an air of satisfaction.

On my inquiring what he considered to be the prospects of a dissolution of Parliament he said, “Heaven only knows. Any other Government would have been out long ago. I am in no hurry for a dissolution.” Here a dissolution bell rang, and he went off to discover whether it concerned the Lords or the Commons. A servant informed him that it was the Commons.

I asked him whether we should wait for him or rejoin him in the Lobby.

CHURCHILL (reflecting): “I’ll come back. No, on the whole I think I won’t vote. I don’t know what it’s about, and I have to be very careful over my votes now that I am an independent member.”

He inquired as to the progress of my candidature at Deptford. “What do they say,” he asked roguishly, “about your admiration for the House of Stuart?”

VIVIAN: “I tell them of my admiration for King Edward VII, and so forth. But I disturbed the consciences of some temperance advocates by turning to my glass of water and exclaiming, ‘If this were full of whisky I would quaff it as a bumper to the health of His Most Gracious Majesty.’”

CHURCHILL: “Oh, oh! What you ought to have said was, ‘Such is my admiration for His Majesty that I am proud to drink his health, and I am delighted to recall the consideration which he showed to those who share my temperance principles when he gave his gracious permission that we might for the future drink his health in water.’”

He May Anticipate the Future...

Almost alone among the hard fighters of politics, Winston Churchill commands universal respect and affection. His noisiest critics unite in admiring his unimpeachable honesty, his conspicuous courage, and perhaps above all his imperturbable good-humour. He can lash out with the polished rapier of his sarcasm, he can charge headlong in an outburst of indignation, he is a past-master in his vocabulary of comminations. But malice is utterly foreign to his nature. He can keep cool in a thunderstorm; he remains modest despite high ambitions, for they possess no taint of selfishness. He may anticipate the future with equanimity because he has made no mistakes in the past. My only regret about him is that Disraeli did not live to be his Boswell.”

The editor confesses to having selected for large-type display a number of Churchill’s remarks to Herbert Vivian that seem remarkably apposite, and worthy of reflection, in 2009.
1908: Churchill Talks of his Hopes, Work and Ideals

Bram Stoker published *Dracula* in 1897. In 1926 Churchill wrote his son: “Have you read *The Long Roll, Cease Firing*, and *Dracula* by Bram Stoker? They interested me very much when I read them.” WSC’s enthusiasm for *Dracula* caused him to grant Stoker the second interview of his early career, following Herbert Vivian (preceding pages). Together they comprise the first two early interviews we know to exist.

**Introduction**

A singular aspect of this 1908 interview—aside from the fact that it was conducted by the author of *Dracula*—is its remembrance of Lord Randolph Churchill—which casts considerable doubt over the standard belief that Winston’s father thought little of his elder son, and doubted he would make anything of himself.

It was around 1887, according to Stoker, when Lord Randolph introduced him to thirteen-year-old Winston: “He’s not much yet, you know. But he’s a good ‘un. He’s a good ‘un!”’ And, Stoker adds, “a ‘good ‘un’ he turned out to be.” This is another indication—there are more—that Lord Randolph thought more of his son than even his son suggested.

Churchill rarely granted interviews, and when he did there had to be an exceptional reason. In the case of Herbert Vivian (foregoing article), it was a friendly political association. In the case of Stoker, it was the memory of Lord Randolph, the not insignificant fact that Churchill as a young man had enjoyed *Dracula*, and certain political parallels between them.

Today Bram Stoker is known for little besides *Dracula*. He did write a dozen novels, some of them fairly grotesque. (His publishers made him change the gruesome ending of *The Jewel of the Seven Stars* if he wanted it reprinted; only in the 2008 Penguin Classics edition was the original ending restored.) Stoker had a lifelong interest in the theatre. Starting in 1878, he spent twenty-seven years as business manager for the actor Henry Irving and Irving’s Lyceum Theatre in London. Irving’s death in 1905 sent Stoker looking for work; he crafted a series of personality profiles, among which was this one. Suffering from Bright’s Disease, he died after a series of strokes at sixty-five.

Another point worth mentioning, given the “Proceedings” that begin on page 44: Irish and strong for Home Rule, Stoker like Churchill was a Liberal who believed firmly in an Ireland within the British Empire. No wonder he got his interview. —RML

**Bram Stoker**

When I wrote to Mr. Winston Churchill asking for an appointment to interview him he replied: “I would very much rather not; but if you wish it I cannot refuse you.” When I met him in his library he explained more fully in words: “I hate being interviewed, and I have refused altogether to allow it. But I have to break the rule for you, for you were a friend of my father.” Then he >>

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Abraham “Bram” Stoker (1847-1912) was an Irish novelist, writer and theatre manager, best known for his 1897 horror novel *Dracula*. Published in the *Daily Chronicle*, London, 15 January 1908, his interview with Winston Churchill was brought to our attention by Professor David Stafford of Edinburgh University. Reprinted by permission from the 2003 Penguin Edition of *Dracula*. 

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BRAM STOKER, 1908...

added gracefully another reason personal to myself: “And because you are the author of Dracula.”

This latter was a vampire novel I wrote some years ago, which had appealed to his young imagination. He had himself been an imaginative writer. The first thing of his which I remember reading was a powerful short story called Man Overboard: An Episode of the Red Sea (Finest Hour 96, Autumn 1997)—a grim, striking story wherein he followed the last thoughts of a drowning man.

As he had already written, some ten years ago, Sartor, a political novel, I asked him if he intended or wished to write others, in case, of course, he should have time to do so through the revolutions of the political wheel. He answered thoughtfully:

“No, I think not; not novels. I hope to write, and to write as much as public life will give me opportunity of doing. But I do not think it will be fiction.

“I would rather write something in the lighter forms of history—a sort of truthful storytelling. It seems to me that the whole tendency of modern historical research is to subdivide and prosecute investigation into each division or aspect of the matter separately. It is all done by sections. The result is not satisfactory. We used to have less details but a general picture, whereas now we get superabundant details but no general sketch, no picture or story. The work should neither be of too great length, nor should it be written for children. There is a growing opportunity for writers who will grip a subject as a whole and convey it intelligently to the plain man who wants to know but who hasn’t got much time. The popularity of Fitchett’s book of Deeds That Won the Empire illustrates what I mean.”

The Revenge of Time

£25.

Twenty-five pounds sterling REWARD is offered by the Sub-Commission of the Fifth Division, on behalf of the Special Constable of the said division to anyone who brings the escaped prisoner of war, CHURCHILL, living or dead, to this office.

For the Sub-Commission of the Fifth Division.

LODK DE HAAS, Secretary.

The above, on poor paper in rough type, after the manner of hue-and-cry placards for runaway slaves in the bad times of slavery, was the notice which followed Winston Spencer Churchill’s escape from the prison at the Model School at Pretoria in December, 1899.

Seven years later the Transvaal was a British Colony, and the ex-prisoner, Winston Churchill, was Under-Secretary for the Colonies in the British Government; an Under-Secretary who manifestly had, and who was manifestly intended to have, an important share in the formation of the new constitution of the new British Colony. “Thus,” says Feste the jester, “the whirli-gig of time brings in his revenges.”

I found Mr. Churchill in his study at his pretty house in Bolton Street, off Piccadilly. The Under-Secretary of the Colonies is a working man and a bachelor; the whole of the first floor, usually allotted domestically for a drawing-room, is here utilized as a study, two rooms having been thrown into one. The houses in this part of Bolton Street are not large, and in them every inch of space is generally arranged by clever architects to practical use. The colour tone of the room is rich green, relieved somewhat gloomily by the heavy mahogany paneling and the many bookcases of the same dark wood, velvet pile carpet of green, green chairs and sofas.

The study table is a remarkable one. An immensely large and wide piece of Chippendale in mahogany with carved legs and bevelled edges richly carved; a table that seems as though it were made for the work of collating documents. Elsewhere in the double room are pretty pieces of Empire furniture of tulipwood.

The shelves are filled with a varied assortment of books, mostly deluxe editions, showing the catholic taste of the Churchill family, for very many of these editions have the bookplate of Lord Randolph Churchill.

Here in addition to the heavier works of history, philosophy and those bearing on politics and public life, are fine editions handsomely bound of Edgar Allan Poe, Carlyle, Richardson, Jane Austen, Dean Milman, George Grote, the Brontes, etc.

Of course there are not here the accumulations of letters and papers; of Blue-books and files of documents which cumbers up a statesman’s office. All such are in his rooms at the Colonial Office and the House of Commons. Though a Minister may—and does—do much of his work in his own home, the work of this class is selected, and only such papers and authorities as are required are brought to him.

Mr. Churchill as a Boy

Over the fireplace in the outer room is set in the panel a fine portrait by Romney of an officer, Captain Peletan, in uniform. The windows are double framed so that the war of the elements and the roar of traffic in the neighbouring Piccadilly can be effectually kept out. On the wall of the inner room, set so as to face one, is a life-like portrait of the Rt. Hon. Lord Randolph Churchill.

When I came to London to be Henry Irving’s manager, my acquaintance with Lord Randolph, made in Ireland, continued. Our relations were always most friendly. He often came to the Lyceum Theatre; he was a great admirer of Irving, and occasionally stayed for supper in the old Beefsteak Room.
One evening at the theatre—I think it was during the long run of *Faust*—when between the acts I was walking in the passage, I heard his voice behind me: “Oh, Bram Stoker, I want to introduce my boy to you.” I turned, and the introduction was made. Young Winston was then about thirteen, a strongly built boy with red hair and very red cheeks. A bright-looking boy, somewhat on the sturdy side, and eminently healthy. As we shook hands the father laid his hand affectionately on the boy’s shoulder and, patting it in a loving way, said: “He’s not much yet, you know. But he’s a good ’un. He’s a good ’un!” And a “good ’un” he turned out to be.

The son has more than fulfilled the predictions of the father. He is at this moment in the very foremost rank of living British statesmen, his dashing, pugnacious methods allied to his great gifts as a speaker, his lucid power in handling public questions, and his remarkable breadth of view, distinguishing him above all his rivals.

STOKER: “Why did you leave the Army? You seem to have liked soldiering and to have got on very well with it.”

CHURCHILL: “I was very happy in the Army. I did like soldiering. But the fact is that in peacetime there is little if any scope in the Army for a man who wants to be active. Of course, I mean very active, and in different ways, for there is always plenty of routine work in military service. Anyhow, a man must choose his own way of life, and if it is only fighting that a man wants there is plenty of that in politics. It is only by following out one’s own bent that there can be the really harmonious life.”

STOKER: “Won’t you define what you mean exactly by that?” He smiled. I do not think that he cares much for definitions; he makes up his mind in his own way, a way to satisfy himself.

CHURCHILL: “Harmonious life. A life when a man’s work is also his pleasure and vice versa. That conjunction, joined with a buoyant temperament, makes the best of worldly gifts.”


CHURCHILL: “Simply because it implies a lot of other things: good health and strength, for instance. The great majority of human beings have to work the greater part of the day, and then amuse themselves afterwards—if they are not too tired. But the lucky few derive their keenest interest and enjoyment not from any contrast between business and idle hours—but from the work itself. Certainly physical health has a good deal to do with it. Henry James’ speaks of a religion of healthy usefulness.”

STOKER: “I note, Mr. Churchill, that you use the words politics and politician where I mean statesmanship and statesman. May I take it that I am in accord with your ideas?”

CHURCHILL (smiling): “Don’t you think it would be at least unbecoming of a man to speak of himself as a statesman? Politics and politician seem to me to be very good and adequate words, quite equal to the purpose required of them. Politics are quite big enough, I assure you.”

STOKER: “What, in your opinion is the modern tendency of politics?”

CHURCHILL: “All politics in this country, and I think all over the world, are becoming divided along social and economic lines of cleavage. The movements of the past have never so operated. The Reform secured, directly and indirectly, freedom of conscience. The English revolt and rebellion of the 17th century established Parliamentary government. The French Revolution achieved a very considerable measure of political equality—the idea of a national nation—citizens not separated by class prejudice; but there yet remains the greatest of all the anomalies, the social and economic...
BRAM STOKER, 1908...

injustice. All politics are focusing on this.

“Perhaps it is for America to show the way. There is the naked issue between capital and labour. America’s contribution to the movement for human progress will be some solution, necessarily complicated, of the economic problems which confront scientific civilization.”

“Deep, Earnest Purpose”

The smile was not-existent at the end of this guess at the future. Instead, there was a look of concentrated gravity—of deep, earnest purpose, which showed something of the man within. Behind the face-mask of boyhood there came something quite different—the something which revealed a passionate earnestness not to be suspected from his general appearance. The incipient wrinkles which only show occasionally on the smooth skin of his forehead seemed to deepen, the fine lines of the well-cut mouth to harden; the eyes to get a new and earnest look.

Winston Churchill is in his 34th year, with the record of four campaigns behind him and enough memories of personal adventurer to equip a Ballantyne or a Kingston. He has sat in Parliament for years and always as one of the most strenuous and daring of Members. He has borne officially the heat of the day in the new Parliament which came into the turmoil after a reign of twenty years by their political opponents.

In the Commons he has been the official mouth-piece of his party and Cabinet in Colonial matters, and has held himself worthy against all odds. But in appearance he is still a boy. Let us see him as he leans against the mantelpiece in his study, gay and debonnaire.

Of medium height, he looks rather slimmer than he is, for he is compactly built. The red hair of his boyhood has lost some of its fire, and seems now rather a reddish brown than red. The eyes of light blue are large, blue velvet-covered books used for record-keeping, and have in them something of the free quality of the eyes of a bird. The mouth is an orator’s mouth: clear-cut, expressionable, and not small. The forehead is both broad and high, with a fairly deep vertical line above the nose; the chin strong and well formed. His hands are somewhat remarkable; a sort of index to his life as well as to his general character. They are distinctly strong hands. Broad in the palm, with that breadth which palmists take as showing honesty; fingers both long and fairly thick, but tapering; the thumb slightly bent backward at the top joint. The man with such a hand should go far.

When I asked him to enlighten me as to his change of party he smiled again, but differently this time, a somewhat inscrutable smile, old Wisdom looking out of the gleeful face of Boyhood. He will, I think, take perennial delight in all that led up to that change and in the doing of it. His words, together with the tone in which they were spoken and that enlightening something which is conveyed by appearance, expression and manner all in unison, seemed to satisfy one’s intellect.

CHURCHILL: “When I was in the Conservative Party, to which I had been brought up, I was called a Tory Democrat. Even then I belonged to the progressive wing of the party. I came into Parliament after the Boer War as a representative of the high-water mark of Tory Imperialism. But I was actually already in complete reaction against it. Indeed, when my change of party came there was not far to go. I went into politics on the Conservative side, just as a man might go to Oxford because his father had been there. My father was a Tory Democrat, and I had been brought up in that atmosphere.”

STOKER: “What is Tory Democracy?”

CHURCHILL: “The association of us all through the leadership of the past—that was what I thought it meant. It was only later on that I learned that its aspirations were exploited by the vested interests of Conservatism, simply to win the votes and popularity of working men.”

As he spoke my mind went back to a passage of his speech before the National Liberal Federation in Manchester in 1904 which seemed to link his old political faith with his new:

We are here to sweep away the whisperings of despair. We are not going back: we are going on. Our movements are toward better, fairer organization of society, and our faith is strong and high that the time shall surely come—and will come sooner for our efforts—when the dull, grey clouds under which millions of our countrymen are monotonously toiling will break and melt and vanish for ever in the sunshine of a new and noble age.

Endnotes

4. Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), American short story writer and poet; Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), Scottish historian, philosopher, essayist and critic; Samuel Richardson (1689-1761), British novelist and printer; Jane Austen (1775-1817), British novelist; Henry Hart Milman (1791-1868), British historian and poet, rector of St. Mary’s Church, Reading from 1818; George Grote (1794-1871), British historian. Charlotte Bronte (1816-1855), Emily Bronte (1818-1848) and Anne Bronte (1820-1849) were sisters, each a British novelist and poet.
5. Large, blue velvet-covered books used for record-keeping by the British Parliament beginning in the 15th century.
6. George Romney (1734-1802), English portrait painter.
8. Robert Ballantyne (1825-1894), a Scot; William Henry Giles Kingston (1814-1880), an Englishman; both writers of boys’ adventure stories.
Sir Winston’s Breguet pocket-watch, still in perfect working order, will be on display at The Churchill Centre’s dinner honoring David Cameron MP in London on October 20th. Owned by his grandson Winston, it is attached to a heavy gold waistcoat-chain which, at the end, has a small round gold case for holding gold Sovereigns, a “V for Victory” emblem (similar, we believe, to ones he gave members of his wartime cabinet in 1945), a silver head of Napoleon (of whom he was a lifelong admirer), a keepsake medallion of the (Westminster) Abbey Division By-Election of 1924 (which WSC lost by just forty-three votes), a garnet stone set in a gold heart (the gift of Clementine on their wedding day in September 1908) and another golden heart, which Clementine gave Winston on his 90th birthday (after fifty-six years of marriage and seven weeks before his death).

There is no mention of Breguet in the Churchill canon, but several references to “pocket watch” and to “The Turnip,” which was his and the family’s nickname for the timepiece:

Sarah Churchill, A Thread in the Tapestry, 38:
One day at lunch when coffee and brandy were being served my father decided to have a slight “go” at Professor Lindemann, his scientific adviser, who had just completed a treatise on the Quantum Theory. “Prof,” he said, “tell us in words of one syllable and in no longer than five minutes what is the Quantum Theory.” My father then placed his large gold watch, known as “The Turnip,” on the table. When you consider that Prof must have spent many years working on this subject, it was quite a tall order, however without any hesitation, like quicksilver, he explained the principle and held us all spell-bound. When he had finished we all burst into applause. Over the years I made a special effort to ask those who had known my father well to tell me about Lindemann. They all told the same story of closest friendship. WSC’s nephew Johnny told me when we talked in London: “He swore by Lindemann.”

Christopher Long, “Chartwell Memories,” Finest Hour 126, 33:
I spent the entire afternoon in the drawing room, clambering all over an accommodating old man in an armchair who seemed designed for the purpose. Though very ancient, he had several unusual attractions to recommend him, which included an interesting gold watch on a chain strung across his stomach and a cigar which needed to be cut with a cigar-cutter. Indeed, at my insistence, it needed to be re-cut quite frequently. [This watch was known to the family as “The Turnip.” —Mary Soames.]

William Manchester, The Last Lion, vol. 2, Alone 1932-1940, 12:
Even at Chartwell his dilatoriness is a source of distress for both his family and the manor’s staff. Once a manservant conspired against him by setting his bedroom clock ahead. It worked for a while, because he scorned that offspring of trench warfare the wristwatch, remaining loyal to his large gold pocket watch, known to the family as “The Turnip,” which lay beyond his grasp. After his suspicions had been aroused, however, the game was up; he exposed it by simply asking morning visitors the time of day.

Roy Howells, Simply Churchill (Churchill’s Last Years), 20-21:
We tried all kinds of ruses to get him out of bed in time and one of them was putting forward every clock in his bedroom. We tried this too often however and eventually he became wise to it. I spotted him one day checking the bedroom clocks against his pocket-watch. In an attempt to beat this manoeuvre I countered by putting his pocket-watch on [ahead] ten minutes when he was not looking. Still he was suspicious. He used to win in the end by asking someone entering the room, no matter how many clocks he had around him, “Uh-huh, what time is it?” The person naturally told the truth and we were back where we started.

Edmund Murray, Churchill’s Bodyguard, 85
...I looked at my watch. “It’s one o’clock, sir,” I said, “time for lunch.” With great deliberation he pulled out his pocket-watch and consulted it. “No,” he said at last, “it’s only five to one. Why do you wish to rob me of five minutes of my life?” “Sorry sir. My watch must be fast...but lunch is at one.”
With Hitler’s Luftwaffe pounding London in September 1940, Edward R. Murrow, chief European correspondent for the Columbia Broadcasting System, wanted to be closer to the story. For weeks, Murrow had been asking the Air Ministry for permission to send live broadcasts on the German raids to America from London’s rooftops. The Ministry had refused. Censors could not be sure what the American correspondent might report in a live broadcast.

To address the Air Ministry’s concerns, Murrow and a sound technician went up to the roof of the British Broadcasting Corporation building and recorded a description of an air attack on London. The Ministry told Murrow it sounded fine but again refused permission. Murrow made six more test recordings so that the officials could be sure that he had not compromised security. Although they did not find any violations, Murrow’s request was again turned down.

Murrow was undeterred.

Through his influential contacts, Murrow reached the Prime Minister. A former war correspondent himself, Churchill approved the broadcasts.2 He hoped that Murrow’s radio reports would affect American public opinion, that sympathy for Britain’s plight would move the United States toward joining the war. Privately, Churchill was convinced that American belligerence was the surest key to ultimate victory.

With Churchill’s approval, Murrow began reporting from London’s rooftops on Britain’s fight for survival. In his elegant and distinctive voice, listeners in America heard Murrow’s first rooftop broadcast on 21 September 1940. Murrow began the broadcast with his famous signature opening, so familiar to his audience since 1937, “This is London.”

I am standing on a rooftop looking out over London. At the moment everything is quiet. For reasons of national as well as personal security, I’m unable to tell you the exact location from which I’m speaking. Off to my left, far away in the distance, I can see just that faint red angry snap of anti-aircraft bursts against the steel-blue sky, but the guns are so far away that’s impossible to hear them from this location.

Searchlights flooded the sky on Murrow’s right:
I think probably in a minute we shall have the sound of guns in the immediate vicinity. The lights are swinging over in this general direction now. You’ll hear two explosions. There they are! That was the explosion overhead, not the guns themselves. I should think in a few minutes there may be a bit of shrapnel around here. Coming in, moving a little closer all the while.

Egbert Roscoe Murrow was born in Polecat Creek, North Carolina on 25 April 1908. The youngest of three sons born to Ethel Lamb and Roscoe Murrow, Egbert grew up in a house made of yellow poplar and black walnut logs. The Murrows were Quaker landowners, whose antecedents had supported the Union in the Civil War and favored the abolition of slavery. In 1913, the family moved west and settled on Puget Sound in Blanchard, Washington, where Ethel Murrow’s cousin lived. Egbert and his brothers, Dewey and Lacey, grew up in Blanchard, a community dependent on logging, railroads and farming.

After graduating from high school, Murrow spent a year working in a logging camp in the Pacific Northwest, where he began to use the name Edward. He then attended Washington State College, where he took a course on communications with a teacher named Ida Lou Anderson, who imparted a love of learning and had a keen ability to teach and critique speech, diction and presence.

Murrow was impressed with this small woman deformed by infantile paralysis. Ida had one maxim that he always remembered: “God will not look you over for medals, degrees or diplomas, but for scars.”

Grading from college in 1930, Murrow worked in New York as president of the National Student Federation of America, and later as director of the Institute of International Education. In 1933, CBS hired him as director of talks and education, and two years later made him head of its European Bureau. Murrow and his wife Janet, whom he’d married in 1934, went to London. Since his 1930 visit he had not cared for England, particularly the climate. But now history was stirring, and the Murrows arrived on the cusp of great events.

Since Murrow was responsible for arranging talks and special events for broadcast to America, his sphere of contacts and prestige grew. One politician that he contacted for a broadcast interview was an unpopular Cassandra, warning of the German threat: the Member for Epping, Winston Churchill.

In 1938, a young midwesterner, Eric Sevareid, later an outstanding news journalist and writer, was also in London. Sevareid was impressed with the quality of editorials and essays of English journalists. “Some of these men I met in Whitehall and Fleet Street,” Sevareid wrote later:

I was impressed by them. I was more sharply impressed, as it happened, by a young American, a tall, thin man with a boyish grin, extraordinary dark eyes that were alike and intense one moment and somber and lost the next. He seemed to possess that rare thing, an instinctive, intuitive recognition of truth. His name was Edward R. Murrow.

He talked about England through half the night, and, although he had been there only about a year, one went away with the impulse to write down what he said, to recapture his phrases, so that one could recall them and think about them later. I knew I wanted to listen to this man again, and I had a strong feeling that many others
When Murrow himself began broadcasting to America, he was listened to by millions. His pioneering broadcasts using reporters in different international cities set the standard for international news. While reporting on British politics and the developments on the European continent, particularly the territorial conquests of Germany’s Adolf Hitler, Murrow watched Churchill stand almost alone in warning his countrymen of the German threat.

Seeking information himself, Churchill for his part welcomed foreign journalists, businessmen, diplomats, army officers and others to his country home Chartwell. Ed Murrow was among those invited.

With the onset of the Second World War, Murrow often reported on Churchill, as on 11 April 1940:

Mr. Winston Churchill left the famous Map Room at the Admiralty and went to the House of Commons this afternoon to tell the House and the world how the war at sea is getting on. His arrival in the packed House of Commons was greeted by the low-pitched roar reserved by the House for Ministers who enjoy the confidence and respect of all political parties. Mr. Churchill was tired, his face expressionless, as he walked down to his seat beside the Prime Minister. He rubbed his eyes, whispered a few words to Mr. Chamberlain, put on his spectacles, and began a speech which was to last for nearly an hour and ten minutes….

Mr. Churchill today was a combination of orator, actor, elder statesman, and fighting prophet. He was more than that. He was the man who for five years had sat in the corner seat below the gangway, a political exile, while he uttered warnings of increasing German might as he watched the big clock above the Speaker’s chair tick off what he believed to be missed opportunities… The House of Commons liked Mr. Churchill’s speech…. It was certainly the most brilliant effort seen in the House of Commons since the war started.8

On 10 May 1940, Murrow broadcast to America the electrifying news that the man he had followed with such fascination since the mid-1930s had become Prime Minister:

History has been made too fast over here today. First, in the early hours this morning, came the news of the British unopposed landing in Iceland. Then the news of Hitler’s triple invasion [Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg] came rolling into London, climaxed by the German air bombing of five nations. British mechanized troops rattled across the frontier into Belgium. Then at 9 o’clock tonight a tired old man spoke to the nation from Number Ten Downing Street. He sat behind a big oval table in the Cabinet Room where so many fateful decisions have been taken during the three years that he has directed the policy of His Majesty’s government. Neville Chamberlain announced his resignation….

Winston Churchill, who has held more political offices than any living man, is now Prime Minister. He is a man without a party. For the last seven years he has sat in the House of Commons, a rather lonesome and often bellis-case figure, voicing unheeded warnings of the rising tide of German military strength. Now, at the age of sixty-five, Winston Churchill, plump, bald, with massive round shoulders, is for the first time in his varied career of journalist, historian and politician the Prime Minister of Great Britain. Mr. Churchill now takes over the supreme direction of Britain’s war effort at a time when the war is rapidly moving toward Britain’s doorstep. Mr. Churchill’s critics have said that he is inclined to be impulsive and, at times, vindictive. But in the tradition of British politics he will be given his chance. He will probably take chances. But if he brings victory, his place in history is assured.9

On 4 June 1940, after Churchill had delivered his immortal “Never Surrender” speech, Murrow broadcast:

I sat in the House of Commons this afternoon and heard Winston Churchill, Britain’s tired old man of the sea, sum up the recent operations. He told of the 350,000 troops—British and French—brought back from Dunkirk. British losses exceed thirty thousand killed, wounded and missing. Enormous material losses were sustained… A colossal military disaster had occurred, and another blow must be expected immediately. Mr. Churchill believed that these islands could be successfully defended, could ride out the storm of war and outlive the menace of tyranny, if necessary alone. There was a prophetic quality about the speech. “We shall go on to the end,” he said. “We shall never surrender”….

I have heard Mr. Churchill in the House of Commons at intervals over the last ten years. I heard his speech on the Norwegian campaign, and I have some knowledge of his writings. Today, he was different. There was little oratory; he wasn’t interested in being a showman. He spoke the language of Shakespeare with a direct urgency such as I have never before heard in that House. There were no frills and no tricks. Winston Churchill’s speeches have been prophetic. He has talked and written of the German danger for years. He has gone into the political wilderness in defense of his ideas. Today, as Prime Minister, he gave the House of Commons a report remarkable for its honesty, inspiration and gravity.10

As Churchill warned, things got a lot worse before they began to get better. During the grim winter of 1940-41, Sue White, wife of CBS executive Paul White, asked Janet Murrow to represent her organization, Bundles for Britain, in London. Through the efforts of American women volunteers, Bundles for Britain was raising funds for food, clothes and medical equipment, which were sent to England for relief distribution. Within six months of its
founding in 1939, 1100 branches of the relief organization were operating in the United States.

Janet Murrow became executive chairman of Bundles for Britain’s London Committee. Also active in the organization were Clementine Churchill, its honorary chairman, and Mrs. John Gilbert Winant, wife of the American Ambassador.

Janet and Clementine became immediate friends and worked together closely. On 25 August 1941, they and Bundles for Britain representatives visited one of the first hospitals to be bombed, Queen Mary’s, where they paid tribute to the physicians, staff, and patients. Queen Mary’s received £7235 in cash and £1000 in kind from the Newport News, Virginia branch of the organization. Clementine said that the scenes at some hospitals “wring your heart, but they also make you feel proud when you see the work the hospitals are doing, and the courage shown by surgeons, nurses and patients.”

There was much work to be done and Janet and Clementine—they were on a first name basis—often met at Ten Downing Street. There Janet Murrow was introduced to the Prime Minister, who, on occasion, joined them for lunch. These luncheons also gave their husbands a chance to know each other better. Once when Ed came to pick up Janet, Churchill heard his voice and promptly came out of his study. “Good to see you, Mr. Murrow,” said the PM. “Have you time for several whiskies?”

“The American correspondent and the British statesman were cordially acquainted by then, and had a mutual respect for each other as practicing and successful broadcasters,” wrote Alexander Kendrick, Murrow’s first biographer, a journalist and broadcaster. “Churchill was impressed by what other Americans had told him about Murrow, and by the reports he got from his own embassy in Washington, about his effect on American opinion.” Kendrick described Murrow’s relationship with Churchill as “deferential and Churchill’s “perhaps more political than personal.”

Sometimes Churchill called Murrow during the PM’s working/witching hour of two in the morning, inviting him for a nightcap at Number Ten, in the weeks before the Prime Minister’s quarters were moved to Number Ten Annexe, opposite St. James’s Park. The only security was a single constable. Murrow would climb the staircase, past the photographs of premiers and cabinets, to the living room on the top floor. There WSC and Murrow would talk, presumably about American public opinion.

In addition to reporting to America on wartime Britain, Murrow began broadcasting on the BBC about American politics and life. Murrow was trusted by American and British politicians and statesmen alike, and his circle of professional and personal contacts was extensive and varied. Visitors to the Murrow flat #5 at 84 Hallam Street were Mrs. Churchill, Ambassador Winant, Czechoslovakian Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk, Conservative MP Ronald Tree, Labour MPs Ernest Bevin and Harold Laski, Lady Louis Mountbatten, Eleanor Roosevelt and Clark Gable. In 2006 English Heritage placed its coveted blue plaque on the building to mark Murrow’s residence between 1938 and 1946.

In late 1941, the Murrows returned to the United States on a three-month vacation. In a CBS testimonial dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel on December 2nd Archibald MacLeish, the poet and Librarian of Congress, spoke of Murrow’s accomplishments:

> Over the period of your months in London you destroyed in the minds of men and women in this country the superstition that what is done beyond 3000 miles of water is not really done at all—the ignorant superstition that violence and lies and murder on another continent are not violence and lies and murder here…the black and stifling superstition that we cannot see and hear and touch can have no meaning for us.

On December 7th, Ed and Janet Murrow were invited to dinner at the White House. Roosevelt wanted to talk about Anglo-American relations. Murrow was playing golf when he heard the news of Pearl Harbor. Janet telephoned Mrs. Roosevelt, expecting the dinner to
be cancelled, and was surprised when the First Lady said, “We all have to eat. Come anyway.”

**“THIS...IS LONDON”...**

The Murrows dined at the White House. The President was too occupied to join them, but Roosevelt still wished to talk with Ed, and the two met at half-past midnight. The President shared his personal feelings about the attack with Murrow, who knew he had the biggest story of his life. But, good newsmen that he was, he kept it to himself until Roosevelt spoke the next day to the Congress and American people.¹⁸

A week later on December 14th, Janet Murrow wrote Mrs. Churchill from Ponte Vedra, Florida, voicing disillusionment with the growing incompetency and mismanagement of Bundles for Britain. With America now at war, she expected relief efforts to be directed at home, and felt little more could come of the organization. She expected Mrs. Winant would leave and suggested that if Mrs. Churchill wished to do so it would be well to have the British Embassy announce it, in order to assure finality. Janet concluded on a personal note:

As you may have noticed we are at this moment in Florida. The moment the news came from the Pacific Ed wanted to dash right off there. My heart sank. I was afraid he would get no rest at all. But there was no way to get to Manila, so he’s forced to have a few days anyway. The first day it blew a gale, but yesterday and today the sun has shined feebly and we feel we’re very lucky. I wish we could send some of it to you.

We miss you all very much and look forward to our return somewhere around the first of March. I hope you all keep well and that the news from the Middle East will continue to be encouraging. How splendidly they seem to be doing. And it hasn’t been easy I know. My best wishes always to you. Please remember me to Miss Hamblin. We’ll think of you this Christmas season.¹⁹

The Churchills and Murrows had evidently become close friends, as seen in a letter from Clementine to Janet Murrow on 13 May 1943:

I am so delighted that you will both come to the play with me next Thursday, the 20th. I have got tickets for “Present Laughter.” Will you both come to 1, Storey’s Gate Building and have a drink first, and then we can all go on together to the play, and come back to dinner afterwards. I am so much looking forward to seeing you both, and I do think it was good-natured of you to give up having Ronnie and Nancie [Tree] to dinner with you, so that we could all have a little party together. Brendan Bracken is coming too.²⁰

Ed Murrow’s relationship with Churchill was well-known by 1945. Interested in the Prime Minister’s war memoirs, M. Lincoln Schuster of Simon & Schuster wrote to Murrow on 11 July 1945: “Knowing that you are a close friend of Brendan Bracken, and frequently see Mr. Churchill, I thought you might be interested in knowing about this correspondence,” wrote Schuster, who attached a letter sent to Churchill. “We would certainly appreciate your help and guidance on this quest for the most historic Churchill book which would certainly be the answer to a publisher’s prayer.”²¹

Murrow replied to Schuster on 7 August, deftly taking himself off the hook: “I happen to know that Mr. Churchill has not so far signed any contract. He has naturally received a great many offers but has not even answered most of them. I do not feel that I can intervene usefully or effectively in this matter. If I were to raise the subject with him his first query would be ‘What do you know about publishing?’ and I would have to reply, ‘Not a damned thing.’”²²

The Murrows returned to the United States for good in 1946, and Ed became a renowned radio and television broadcaster.²³ But they returned frequently to England, and in 1947, Ed broadcast the wedding of Princess Elizabeth and he and Janet visited the Churchills. Clementine who had kept up her correspondence with Janet, thanked her for the small food parcels she had sent, containing items difficult to obtain in postwar Britain.

On 30 November 1954, Edward R. Murrow made a special broadcast on Churchill’s eightieth birthday:

His political obituary was written when he had scarcely passed forty. He sat for years in the House, warning of the menace of Nazism, while the big clock above the speaker’s chair ticked off the wasted hours. He was a lonely but not a bitter man, always enjoying the cut and thrust of parliamentary debate, where no man was his match.

When he came to power in the spring of 1940, he brooked no recrimination about the past, lest the future thereby be lost. He mobilized the English language and sent it into battle to steady his fellow countrymen and hearten those Europeans upon whom the long dark night of tyranny had descended.²⁴

Five years later, in an October visit to England, Janet and Ed Murrow drove to Chartwell for lunch. Sir Winston was now 85, extremely deaf, and spoke with difficulty. Sadly, he could only observe his guests playing croquet on the lawn.²⁵

Though Ed was thirty-years younger, both he and Churchill died in 1965, the former of lung cancer. Rarely photographed without his trademark Camel, he admitted: “I doubt I could spend a half hour without a cigarette with any comfort or ease.” Nevertheless his TV program, “See It Now,” was the first to air a report on the connection between smoking and cancer.

Looking back, we can see that Churchill and Murrow were similar in many ways. Both had the experi-
ence of being war correspondents. Both showed courage under fire, whether in war, business or politics. Both had perseverance and a dedication to excellence. Both enriched the English language and were master communicators, understanding the power of the media to inspire, educate, and affect public opinion.

Churchill’s star had a long trajectory. Edward R. Murrow, Eric Severeid said, was more of “a shooting star.” But they both shared a fervent belief in the pursuit of truth, the rights of man, and the inviolability of free government, free speech and free thought. To apply what Severeid said of Murrow, “we will live in their afterglow a very long time.”

### Endnotes


4. Kendrick, 102. Ida Lou Anderson considered Murrow her “masterpiece.” She listened to his broadcasts from London and told Murrow his opening phrase, “This is London,” was too hurried and lacked impact. Murrow changed it to “This…is London,” with his famous measured pause.


10. Ibid., 43-44.


13. Ibid., 231-32.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., 216.


17. Kendrick, 239.

18. Ibid., 239-40.

19. Edward R. and Janet Brewster Murrow Papers, Mount Holyoke College, Archives and Special Collections, South Hadley, Massachusetts. Grace Hamblin (1909-2002) was Winston’s and later Clementine’s personal secretary from 1932. In 1966 she became the first National Trust administrator of Chartwell.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Murrow was famous for his programs *Hear It Now, This I Believe, Person to Person, See It Now* and *Years of Crisis*. His award-winning programs included his 1954 broadcast criticizing Senator Joseph McCarthy’s persecution of presumed Communists and his 1960 documentary *Harvest of Shame*, which showed the plight of migrant farm workers. From 1961 to January 1964, Murrow served in the Kennedy-Johnson Administration as the director of the United
painting was another great hobby of the then-Mr. Churchill. Unquestionably, he was a fine artist. Whenever we went on tour abroad he would take his painting kit. Sometimes it was rather a pantomime. I remember staying at the Royal Palace at Brussels. One day Churchill wanted to paint a scene on the banks of the Meuse at Dignon, a picturesque spot. We drove out from Brussels for some miles to get there.

There were quite a number of cars in attendance, carrying politicians, government officials, police and so on. Mr. Churchill got out of the car and walked to the river bank, which was flat, rather like a towpath. For 100 yards or so, he eyed the view critically, and when he found the right spot he stopped. He then asked for his easel to be brought, together with the other painting paraphernalia. No one had thought of bringing a chair, not even a canvas folding one.

By this time a crowd of locals was collecting and had to be held back about fifty yards by a police contingent. Someone ran off to the nearest house and came back with a substantial kitchen table and a heavy farmhouse chair. Mr. Churchill seated himself; the paints, cleaning rags, turpentine and brushes were placed on the table. WSC put on his white smock, the easel and canvas were assembled, and the painting commenced.

After some time, Mr. Churchill turned to me and said: “Fetch a photographer.” I turned to one of the Belgian officials and repeated the request; he called a policeman and passed the message in Flemish.

About half an hour later a hot and flustered Belgian photographer turned up. His eyes nearly popped out of his head when he saw who was sitting at an easel wearing a grey Homburg, a white smock, and smoking an outsize cigar. After lengthy explanations the photographer was persuaded to take a photograph of the view across the river at the exact angle Mr. Churchill was making his painting.

This procedure was always followed when WSC knew he would not be at a place long enough to complete a painting. With a good photograph he would be able to complete the canvas later, using a rather interesting technique.

He had a small studio at Chartwell where he stored dozens of his paintings. When the need moved him he would spend time here touching up his old works or completing new ones. On one occasion I walked with him from the mansion across a glistening carpet of snow to the studio. He placed a partly painted canvas in an upright position at the end of his bench. At the other end was an old fashioned magic lantern; a slide was inserted into the lantern and the image projected onto the canvas. After focusing, the image was brought into correct scale: the same view as the partially completed canvas. The slide had been prepared from a photograph such as the Belgian scene just described. Mr. Churchill was then able to go to the canvas and paint in the outline of some houses and trees that he had not had time to capture at the original sitting.

I watched this for a little while and then said, with respect of course: “Looks a bit like cheating.”

Mr. Churchill looked over the top of his spectacles at me and said quite solemnly: “If the finished product looks like a work of art, then it is a work of art, no matter how it has been achieved.”

Mr. Churchill seldom appeared in public without a cigar. He did this deliberately, even making sure his cigar was alight before leaving an aircraft, contrary to all fire restrictions. He obviously felt that his public expected it.
He smoked about twelve cigars a day, the very best Havana, which cost between 15 and 20 shillings each. This means that his cigar bill per week was in the region of £60. Of course, thousands of cigars were given to him as presents, but he rarely smoked any of these. He had two favorite brands, Camacho and Romeo y Julieta, which he always purchased himself.

He was a very “wet” smoker and used to “dribble.” His butler, who by 1948 was Greenshields, devised a blotting paper ring which looked rather like a very small doughnut. The cigar was pushed through this doughnut so that the ring was about one to two inches from the mouth: an inelegant but highly effective dribble-catcher.

On one occasion at his London home at Hyde Park Gate, visiting dignitaries arrived to bestow one of many Freedom of the City honours. After the ceremony, a glass of sherry and speeches, WSC said, “Greenshields, bring the cigars.” The butler went away and came back with a cigar box, handing them round. The civic dignitaries lit up, as did Mr. Churchill. He took one puff, hesitated, then fixed a stony stare at Greenshields: “Not these you damn fool!” he said in a stage whisper. Poor Greenshields! He had made the mistake of handing round Mr. Churchill’s best cigars.

While I was with him, the former Prime Minister completed The Gathering Storm, the first volume of his war memoirs. Most of it was crafted at Chartwell, in a beautiful oak panelled room on the first floor (second floor for North Americans —Ed.), fitted out as a study. Very sensitive microphones had been installed here by his U.S. publishers so that he might record his draft manuscript. This he did by walking up and down the room and speaking as thoughts came into his head. The tape recorder did not last; WSC soon became frustrated with the mechanics and the wires on the floor, and reverted to his former method of dictating to secretaries.

He’d stop at his stand-up desk and refer to official war papers made available to him by the government, and other references acquired for the purpose. At times he would comment or read from them. Then his narrative would continue. He worked here in the evenings regularly after dinner, and perhaps would continue till one or two in the morning before going to bed. At 8 o’clock in the morning a secretary would arrive for the tapes to start transcriptions, while WSC perused all the national newspapers. At 9 o’clock another secretary would arrive and start dealing with the mail. Yet another came later for other business. Mr. Churchill kept them all fully occupied.

When anyone came to his staff, Churchill treated them much as one of the family. We all know how plainly we speak to one’s spouse or children: no courtesy is intended but there are no frills. This is how Churchill treated his staff. He just told them what he expected. His plain speaking ruffled some, but he was not being rude. It was just his way of getting the maximum done in the minimum of time. He worked his staff to the limit of endurance! When they reached the breaking point he became sympathetic and solicitous. They were gratified, and so continued beyond the limit of endurance!

An interesting aspect of my job was being able to meet the numerous famous people who visited him: Field Marshals Alexander and Montgomery, General Smuts, Lord Ismay, the Duke of Windsor, and many foreign notables. I noticed that nearly all the world figures who came to call on the then-Labour government also came to see Churchill—privately, of course, for he was in opposition. Many called before and after they had their official meetings in Whitehall. This did nothing to popularize WSC with the Attlee people. His reputation for brusqueness was strengthened by his handling of the lesser dignitaries who visited. He had the habit of summing people up after two sentences of conversation. They were classified, it seemed to me, as either “interesting” or “uninteresting.” With the former, conversation ensued; with the latter, Churchill would ignore them. On such occasions Mrs. Churchill frequently came to the rescue, engaging the luckless in conversation. If they were tongue-tied she would do most of the talking until it was time for them to leave.

Mrs. Churchill was a charming woman, who rescued many social and civic events because of the inability of her husband to engage in small talk.

Everyone is familiar with the wonderful Churchillian phrases, but they nevertheless came to me as a shock on some occasions. For example, he might take his dog for a walk in the garden. He’d reach for his hat and stick and Rufus, a small, red-coloured poodle, would jump up. He’d open the door and say something like this: “Come Paprika—let us go forward together.”
PAINTER
AND PIGEON

PETER WILLES


“Orton’s diaries are notorious (and, it has to be said, not for the faint-hearted),” writes Mr. Mehta, “though there seems to be little reason why he would fabricate this anecdote. Unfortunately this short entry is the beginning and the end of it.”

21st December 1966:

Peter Willes told me that when he was young in the Thirties he stayed for the weekend at a house where Churchill was a guest. During the visit Churchill suggested that he do a painting of Willes. Willes said he agreed reluctantly, because he thought it rather a bore. At the end of the visit Churchill presented him with some dreadful daub and Willes threw it out of the train going home. Now Churchill’s paintings sell for thousands of pounds. Willes is awfully cross.

(Churchill didn’t often paint portraits, saying, “a tree doesn’t complain that I haven’t done it justice.” But neither did his wife, judging by his portrait of her launching HMS Indomitable in 1939. Painted from a photo, 1954, it was reproduced on the cover of Finest Hour 83,

Peter Willes (1913-1991) was an actor and producer whose acting career began with Call It a Day in 1937; in 1939 he played supporting roles in two Basil Rathbone films, The Hound of the Baskervilles and The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes.

Frank Capra (1897-1991) was a film director who produced numerous tours de force including It Happened One Night (1934), Mr. Deeds Goes to Town (1936), You Can’t Take It With You (1938), Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (1939), Arsenic and Old Lace (1944) and It’s a Wonderful Life (1946).
"Churchill Tried to Starve Occupied Europe"

RICHARD M. LANGWORTH & WARREN F. KIMBALL

It is occasionally suggested, particularly on the World Wide Web, that Churchill favored withholding food and medical aid to occupied Belgium, and other countries under the Nazi boot, in an effort to cause revolts against the Germans, while President Roosevelt insisted on shipping aid to the needy. This is an inaccurate interpretation of the views of both leaders, not borne out in the documents, including memoirs of the principals.

The Allies blockaded Nazi-occupied Europe as part of the war effort. But it is unlikely that Churchill would entertain such Machiavellian thoughts, and no such evidence has turned up. Churchill did, however, object in principle to sending food to countries occupied by the enemy. And so, apparently, did FDR.

Roosevelt advocated humanitarian aid to unoccupied countries like Vichy France, and Churchill went along with this. But in 1943, when Roosevelt suggested aid to occupied Norway, Churchill said “conditions in Belgium are worse than in Norway and in our judgement it would not be right to make a concession to Norway and not to Belgium.”

Churchill’s policy (as advised by his military chiefs) was clearly aimed at the common enemy, as he wrote in 1943: “To abandon the principle that the enemy is responsible for the territories he has conquered will lead very quickly to our having the whole lot on our backs, a burden far beyond our strength.”

Mischief-makers have implied that Churchill wished to starve the Belgians into revolt. But until evidence is shown, we cannot accept this.

Churchill’s daughter once said, “My father would have done anything to win the war, and I’m sure he had to do some very rough things—but they didn’t unman him.” An overt starvation campaign does not, however, appear to be one of those things. —RML

A message (drafted by Sumner Welles) from Roosevelt to Churchill dated 31 December 1940 makes no mention of Belgium, but proposes, “for humanitarian and also political reasons,” sending “limited quantities of milk and vitamin concentrates for children” through the Red Cross to unoccupied [my emphasis] France and to Spain. FDR drew a distinction between occupied and unoccupied territory. He seemed primarily concerned with Spain. The carrot, not the stick, was advocated by the State Department for Franco’s Spain.

This was a positive response to Churchill’s message of 23 November 1940, suggesting that the USA “dole out” food to Spain “month by month” so long as Spain stayed out of the war.

What FDR did, in his message of 31 December, was to add unoccupied France—something he indicated had met with opposition from British blockade authorities on the grounds that the distinction between occupied and unoccupied France would be difficult to establish or enforce.

Churchill replied on 3 January 1941, cautiously agreeing to such humanitarian relief shipments, but asking for strict adherence to the conditions and assurances from Vichy that it would acknowledge “the cooperation of His Majesty’s Government....” WSC ended asking for FDR to provide the same assurances: It was all right, Churchill wrote, to say it was a USA initiative, but “we would like it stated that the relief goods are available only by the good will of His Majesty’s Government.” (Perhaps the first and only time Churchill equated the United States and Vichy!)

Thereafter it seems that relief to Vichy France gets caught in the politics of Vichy’s neutrality. But even there I find nothing wherein WSC argues that humanitarian relief should be withheld so as to foment uprising in occupied territory. In 1940-41, my cursory look shows that such aid was discussed only for unoccupied lands.

Three years later, on 15 March 1944, Roosevelt wrote Churchill saying he’d been thinking further about “limited feeding programs for children and nursing and expectant mothers in the German occupied countries of Europe.” Belgium is specifically mentioned. Roosevelt (in a message drafted by the State Department) made a plea on humanitarian grounds that withholding food “hurt our friends more than our enemies.” On 8 April Churchill rejected this proposal, arguing that it would hurt “impending military operations,” as it required opening channels of transportation into Europe.

Intelligence reports, available to both Churchill and Roosevelt, indicate that short rations did not damage enemy morale. The total embargo/blockade on relief to occupied countries was, by 1944, of no strategic value, and added to the existing humanitarian tragedy. That said, I can find no words or actions by Churchill holding back relief to Belgium to create conditions so horrible that the Belgians would revolt. Not only was Churchill not so jaded, but he also knew that such a revolt (unlikely as it was) would be crushed like an eggshell by Nazi/Gestapo enforcers.

This claim is reminiscent of the “Auschwitz argument,” that liberation would be quicker and more effective than dealing with the immediate situation—not much help to Jews in the camp, or starving mothers in Belgium; it is the old debate: a short-term prophylactic versus a permanent solution.

There is no mention that I can find by Churchill inciting the Belgians to revolt. As I recall, he really didn’t think the Belgians had the stomach for revolt, but that’s a question for others.

To the extent that Franklin Roosevelt comes out looking more humane, it is because he did, in one instance in 1944, support food shipments to Belgium, while Churchill, perhaps following the advice of his mili-
The Flawed Wars of Winston Churchill

DAVID FREeman

Thirty years ago the late John Grigg interrupted work on his acclaimed multi-volume biography of David Lloyd George to write *1943: The Victory That Never Was* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1980). Grigg argued that the Second World War could have been won sooner, but did not convince fellow historians, who instead complained that 1943 uselessly diverted Grigg from completing his magnificent study of Lloyd George. Still, as with all of his books, 1943 was well written.

The same cannot be said for Christopher Catherwood’s breezy resurrection (*sans* style or conviction) of Grigg’s argument. The style is the same sort of insipid armchair strategizing that characterized Pat Buchanan’s *Churchill, Hitler and the Unnecessary War* (*FH* 139), and with the same result: a meretricious thesis that fails to stand up even to cursory scrutiny.

Intriguingly, Catherwood completed his doctoral studies under the supervision of revisionist historian John Charmley. But the student absorbed little of Charmley’s style, and disagrees with his mentor about Churchill’s actions prior to 1941.

Instead, in what he calls “postrevisionist” thinking, Catherwood argues that through 1940 Churchill behaved quite properly in opposing appeasement and refusing any settlement with Hitler after the Fall of France. Only after 1940 did Churchill do everything wrong. Got that? *Everything,* Hence, the subtitle “Flawed Genius.”

Here’s the pitch: in 1941 Churchill stole victory from the British army in North Africa by diverting forces to the obviously futile defense of Greece. This enabled Rommel to arrive in the desert and change the situation to the point that British were tied down in Africa by the time the United States entered the war.

Needing, for political reasons, to have U.S. troops in action as soon as possible, Roosevelt accepted Churchill’s suggestion that Americans be landed in North Africa. But completing the desert struggle delayed the cross-channel invasion until 1944, with the result that millions more Jews perished in the Holocaust and Stalin occupied most of eastern and central Europe, ringing down the Iron Curtain.

In case you missed the last points, Catherwood repeats them every ten pages or so. While conceding that others have drawn the link between Greece interfering with the African campaign, Catherwood argues that he is the first to make the linkage between this and the delay of D-Day, which he insists could otherwise have been carried out as early as April 1943. Such an early attack would have been easier than the one in June 1944 and, because the German army would have been more stretched, would have enabled Anglo-Americans to drive deep into central Europe ahead of the Soviets.

Well, that is a mighty big stack of ifs, and the house of cards falls apart under the brutal weight of logistical reality. To clinch his argument, Catherwood needed to show that the planning, logistics and industrial support necessary to carry out a successful cross-channel invasion could have existed by April 1943. This he does not even attempt to do, beyond arguing that sufficient landing craft could have been provided. Landing craft alone do not an invasion make.

The meticulous planning and logistical support for the Normandy landings remains a mind-boggling achievement. It required tremendous time to put together, as British military commanders saw from the start. Even Operation Fortitude (the brilliantly successful plan simply to deceive the Germans about the location of the attack) necessitated much premeditation. Putting D-Day together took years, as did organizing American industry to provide sufficient material support. Could all of this have been done successfully barely a year after American entry into the war? One look at the condition of the U.S. Army in December 1941 provides the answer.

But Catherwood considers none of these factors. Instead he spends a chapter showing how Churchill tried to postpone Overlord still further while pursuing a Mediterranean strategy. Another chapter rehashes the “Percentages Agreement” with Stalin in Moscow. All this has been examined many times before, but none of it has anything to do with proving Catherwood’s thesis. And he fails to prove it because he cannot.
I can only say that I am glad I was not a soldier being landed on a French beach in April 1943 when, as Catherwood sees it, the German army was so much weaker than it was a year later. The probable result of a 1943 landing would have been disaster and a prolongation of the war. Thank goodness Churchill was "wrong."

The author's thesis amounts to this: Churchill set-up a non-democratic government in Iraq without regard to self-determination of the inhabitants, particularly majority Shia Muslims in the south and minority Kurds in the north. From this unstable solution, much grief has ensued. This interpretation is padded out with irrelevant observations, modern comparisons, and How-About-That! interjections—a cloying style that can make you long for something "deliberately narrative and non-analytical." But the main problem is the book's failure to place Churchill's actions in context, to understand his goals and outline his limitations for maneuver.

Catherwood begins just after World War I, when Churchill took over as Secretary of State for War and Air, with responsibility for demobilization. Repeatedly he emphasizes that Churchill's primary objective in finding a postwar Middle East settlement was to save money. Without any background knowledge, one would think that Churchill was a monomaniac on the subject of government economy (and long for similar political leaders today). Yet, the impression Catherwood gives is that Churchill's "obsession" with cost was the contributing factor to a bad settlement with lasting repercussions. Only once, however—and this half-way through the book—does Catherwood acknowledge that the British government of the time "simply did not have the money to conduct major military operations abroad" (118). Failure to expand on this and the other "loose ends," debts and obligations accrued by Britain during the Great War is where he goes off track.

Catherwood is shocked, shocked, that having gained responsibility for the ancient realm of Mesopotamia the British, i.e., Churchill, imposed a settlement that was in their own interests without regard to the native inhabitants—a tendency of imperial powers through the ages, except that the British liked to economize by backing local rulers, as they did in India, and so allowing for some measure of self-government.

Why couldn't Churchill see that what was best for the world was to allow Iraqis to work out their own solution? This is sheer "presentism," or what William Manchester referred to as "generational chauvinism": judging past acts by present standards.

Things were different then. Asked why Churchill seated a foreign king in Iraq at his 2003 Churchill Lecture, David Fromkin replied:

While Churchill himself was a monarchist, in the world in which he grew up, that is what you did....As for Feisal, there was a general feeling at the time that when you brought in a king for a new country, it ought to be somebody who is not from that country—not involved in its internal feuds.

For his true motivations it is best to look at what Churchill himself said on the matter. Speaking of his Middle East settlement, he told the House of Commons in 1921:

Moving this way and that in the agony of the Great War, struggling for our lives, striking at our enemies, now here and now there, wherever it was thought best, we eventually emerged victorious in arms and encumbered with the responsibilities which so often attach to the victor. We are bound to make a sincere, honest, patient, resolute effort to redeem our obligations.

There is the key: Churchill was trying to fulfill promises made and responsibilities assumed during and after the infinitely greater matter of the First World War, and to do so with necessarily diminishing resources. At the same time he aimed to achieve what was best for his own country. On that level, he certainly succeeded. What else was he supposed to do?

If all this seems unfair or unfortunate by today's standards one should remember that Churchill was exercising the oldest of all rights—the right of conquest. In dismissing an Arab delegation that had hoped to dissuade him from fulfilling the promise of the Balfour Declaration to support a national home for the Jews in Palestine, Churchill curtly pointed out that it was the armies of Britain, not the Arabs, which had captured the region from the Turks. The British had paid the blood price to call the shots, and call them they would. Such is the way of the world. ☞

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Christopher Catherwood's first book about Churchill, as the title indicates, set out to show how WSC erred in helping to establish the modern state of Iraq during his time at the Colonial Office in 1921-22. Published about a year into the present Iraq war, the author aimed to capitalize on current interest, but the result is of little historical value because as the author interprets everything backwards.

This story has been told before, and by much better scholars. Catherwood acknowledges Sir Martin Gilbert's Volume IV of the official Churchill biography, and David Fromkin's touchstone work, A Peace to End All Peace. But Gilbert, he says, is "deliberately narrative and nonanalytical," while Fromkin presents "a slightly incomplete picture" (16-17).

Sir Martin long ago addressed here in Finest Hour* the first charge, which is both spurious and hoary; and if anything, Fromkin presents a much more complete picture of events as he places the origins of modern Iraq in the broader context. Catherwood's book smacks of a sensationalist rush job.

Don’t Judge a Book by its Cover... Or by its Ridiculous Title

TED HUTCHINSON


No, this is not another book by Christopher Catherwood (previous pages). But since the cover carries a guarantee that it is “100% Horrible,” I didn’t expect much. I was surprised and pleased to discover a fine juvenile biography that might give a reader of any age a chuckle or two.

It’s part of a series about important British and world figures including Elizabeth I, Charles Darwin, Henry VIII and Julius Caesar: to be covered a person needs to be “horribly famous.” It’s aimed at young adolescents; it seems about right for sixth graders, precocious younger readers, and perhaps older students who have trouble reading or come from households where reading is not a frequent activity. What I liked most is that the book targets young people who have read little or no history or biography.

Though a straightforward cradle-to-grave biography, the book has many features not found in conventional studies. Abundant illustrations with amusing cartoons depict the action. Thus it is almost half “graphic novel.” Artist Goddard strives for light and airy cartoons, and though he never captures what Churchill actually looked like, he does draw a nice picture of Chartwell, and of Churchill holding court at an imagined lunch with his pals Bracken, Beaverbrook, The Prof and E.E. Smith. The book is also illustrated with quotes by Winston, Clementine and others, and entries from WSC’s fictional “lost diary” which put some of the complex events in his life into words understandable by young readers.

About the intellectual contents I had the lowest expectations, but for the most part I was satisfied. While all aspects of Churchill’s life are touched upon, the three largest sections focus on his youth (understandably) and the two world wars. The youth chapters are a bit problematic, since they buy far too much of the legends that WSC was a poor student and ignored child. It’s clear MacDonald leaned heavily on Churchill’s autobiography, and he should be commended for using this source so diligently. I was surprised by how much he got right in what appears at first glance a frivolous juvenile.

The treatment of the two world wars is flawed. It’s too short a book to explore their ambiguities, causes and events, and in trying to cover them broadly, MacDonald oversimplifies. He cannot properly describe their violence and terror, as one would in a book for adults. Hitler, for instance, comes off as a bumbling cartoon villain. Perhaps this approach is appropriate for the audience. But MacDonald is too hard on Churchill’s second premiership and accepts a few too many myths which have long been disproved.

Whether an adult would enjoy this book depends on whether one can laugh at Churchill. Every page of the book is filled with smart-aleck jokes at his expense; pages show the ridiculous hats he wore; there are cracks about his weight, smoking and ego. Young people might enjoy this more than stuffy histories, and a few might even develop an interest which evolves into fascination—which is all to the good.

This is not the best Churchill juvenile; for my money Fiona Reynolds’s Leading Lives (FH 116) still holds that title. But it is a solid and (yes) respectful biography disguised as a joke, perfect for youths who don’t read enough. Give a copy to such a young person and it might lead to more reading.

When I first read David Irving’s Churchill’s War years ago, I realized that for Irving, Churchill could do nothing right. Walter Reid’s new book has nothing in common with Irving, except to serve as its antithesis: Reid’s Churchill can do nothing wrong.

A fairly standard diplomatic history of the Second World War covers Churchill’s rise to power and his dealings with his cabinet and the military. The following sections comprise accounts of high-level meetings of the Allies as they execute war strategy. Reid does not pretend to offer any vital new information. His goal is to show how the relationships Churchill developed with cabinet members, generals, and allies, hindered his saving Britain and defeating the Axis. Churchill had to save civilization while under “friendly fire.” All the more remarkable, as Reid writes, “in the face of such opposition.”

Reid is right to see Churchill’s leadership as a series of balancing acts, with a Tory Party that did not trust him, a military instinctively doubtful, and allies with different war aims. He is also right to argue that all the more credit should be heaped on Churchill for succeeding. But Reid demonstrates a lack of subtlety and understanding when dealing with those responsible for the “friendly fire.” Virtually all come off negatively, but their deeper motiva-

Mr. Hutchinson is the editor of the Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics in Boston.
describes it as “untactful” or “petulant.” But an equally blunt reply by Churchill (this is redolent of the way Churchill’s worst critics compare his remarks with, say, Stalin’s.) Roosevelt is depicted as an intellectual lightweight who hinders WSC as much as helps him. But rarely is it acknowledged that Roosevelt was a staunch and effective advocate for U.S. interests, even if these were not what Britain may have wanted.

Ironically, Churchill understood all this better than Reid. He knew, yet did not resent, that other politicians might be after his job. He accepted that generals were naturally cautious and needed prodding. He certainly understood that Roosevelt and the other allied leaders put their national interests before Britain’s; he put his nation’s interests in front, too.

Reid does not see in Churchill the leader who had to work in the grubby real world. He seems only to recognize the hero who saved civilization. The truth is, both men existed. Churchill did save civilization, despite enormous difficulties, when no one else could. But to argue that Churchill was always under “friendly fire” overstates the case; Churchill led a democracy, and eventually he was allied with another democracy and a totalitarian state. Internal debates were the products of working with allies, a price WSC understood as well as anyone.

I still recommend Reid’s book. It is a useful diplomatic history, and its thesis has, if nothing else, a spark of originality in a field littered with bland repetition. In the extent to which Reid pursues his thesis lies the main criticism. It is hard to accept that Churchill was “fired upon” by friendlies to the extent Reid believes. And Churchill’s greatness is secure without embellishment; what he did was enough. &

The Dards, Franco, and Other Disasters

CHRISTOPHER H. STERLING

If not Churchill’s greatest failure, the Dardanelles crisis of 1915 was surely his greatest political and even personal crisis. Clementine was later heard to lament that she thought he would “die of grief.” Though not as “forgotten” as the publisher blurb would have you believe, the Dardelles story is both compelling and open to multiple interpretations.

Books that fail even to acknowledge foregoing relevant works should be approached with care. This one fails to credit such important books by Higgins, Wallin, and Penn which focus on Churchill’s role. Combined with the snide introductory comment about not using endnotes because “general readers...don’t want them,” as well as the crippling lack of maps, I was wary of this new study, despite the author’s several well-received books on naval aspects of both world wars.

One more thing: for his chapter on the government inquest into the Dardelles disaster, van der Vat relies on a modern digest of part of the central government report, rather than the full original document—a cardinal sin, since neither he nor his reader knows how selective that digest is.

A British naval historian, van der Vat begins aptly with a careful tracing of more than a century of earlier conflicts between major powers over the Dardelles— noting that both Admiral Fisher (First Sea Lord in 1915) and >>
**THE DARDS, FRANCO...**
Churchill (political head of the Admiralty) had been in the region at different times before World War I. We learn, for example, that the difficulties in forcing a hostile naval force past fortifications in the Narrows was well understood in the Royal Navy years before 1915. Van der Vat quite correctly criticizes the generally timid older admirals, praising selected younger line officers for their spark and verve, and citing several examples.

A fair bit of space is spent on events elsewhere, such as the preceding naval battles of Coronel and the Falklands, seeking to develop context for and connections to the initial decision (in which Churchill played a substantial role) to sail through the Dardanelles “by ships alone.” What comes through most strikingly is the British military tendency to delay, vacillate and dither rather than promptly to follow a firm plan. Lord Kitchener was one of the worst in this regard, as was Churchill’s friend Sir Ian Hamilton and several senior admirals.

Fisher is treated evenhandedly, and so—despite the dark title—is Churchill. The author demonstrates how poorly executed communications (strategic and tactical) made things worse both in London and at sea—a comedy of errors, save for the lives lost.

Despite providing a taut and readable narrative, however, van der Vat doesn’t fulfill the claim of his subtitle. Churchill had many shortcomings, some of them on display in 1914-15. But most of the eventual disaster and by far the largest number of casualties grew out of the Gallipoli land campaign, for which he bore little responsibility. (It was a much-delayed War Office operation under Kitchener.)

Ironically, the most positive aspect of that story was the eventual withdrawal of Allied forces without losing a man.

Laying blame for the whole fiasco predominantly at Churchill’s feet, as many others have done over the near-century since, seems unwarranted by the facts, even as related here. Churchill lost his post at the Admiralty largely due to Conservative Party’s enmity over his having “crossed the floor” a decade earlier; for them his was a handy political head to roll amidst pressure to create a coalition government. Meanwhile, the imperious Lord Kitchener, at least as much if not more to blame for what happened, was untouched.

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**Churchill and Spain: The Survival of the Franco Regime, 1940-1945 by Richard Wigg. Sussex Academic, 254 pp., illus., softbound, $37.50, $30.60 from Amazon.com.**

Outside of Spain, Francisco Franco is now largely forgotten as the longest lasting relic of the dreadful Spanish Civil War of 1936-39. Initially enthralled with and supported by Hitler, Franco dominated his country for thirty years after Germany’s defeat while keeping Spain a second-tier European backwater. Wigg argues (in the revised form of a 2005 monograph) that Churchill’s wartime *Realpolitik* had the unintended result of preserving Franco’s power for decades.

In the summer of 1940, of course, things looked quite different. France lay defeated, Britain faced invasion. The entirely likely German occupation of Spain (and with it, Gibraltar) could cut London’s vital access to the Mediterranean. Even then it was apparent that Franco was strongly tempted to ally his exhausted nation with the Axis cause; Hitler and Mussolini had earlier supported him and provided the chief markets for Spanish exports. Britain desperately needed to keep Spain neutral, or at least from playing an active role.

Seeking to resolve two problems at once, Churchill and Foreign Minister Anthony Eden sent Sir Samuel Hoare (later Viscount Templewood) to Madrid as Britain’s ambassador. Getting Hoare away from London politics was at least as important as the assignment, for he had been one of Chamberlain’s arch-appeasers, and his antipathy to WSC went back to Churchill’s charges of his tampering with evidence during the India Bill debate a decade earlier. The other problem—keeping Franco neutral—might be resolved with the help of Hoare’s long diplomatic experience. Wigg notes that despite policy conflicts with America (Franco was anathema to Roosevelt), both targets were met.

Hoare did help keep Spain out of the war. During his four and a half years in Madrid, however, he grew increasingly disenchanted and then frustrated with Franco’s inept Falange officials and their government. As a possible improvement, Hoare (“Slippery Sam” to Churchill) tried to strengthen the hand of Spain’s monarchists in elevating the pretender, Don Juan, to the throne and easing Franco aside. The intended monarch seemed unable to make up his mind, though Hoare’s plan was chiefly thwarted by a lack of support from either Eden or the monarchist Prime Minister. Fearing any move to weaken or remove Franco might result in the dreaded German intervention, Churchill supported Franco as the pragmatic solution for Spain and Great Britain.

And Churchill went further (much to Hoare’s despair), actively trying to counter growing American pressure for a change in Spain. As early as 1938, Churchill changed his initially positive view of Franco, seeing him now as an odious reactionary—aside from his toady ing to Berlin and Rome. But faced with the higher priority of keeping Spain out of Axis clutches, he sent Hoare and hoped for the best.

Wigg had to force release of some material through use of the British Freedom of Information Act, but his book is well documented as a result. Readable and revisionist, it focuses on the comparative performances of Churchill and Hoare. Wigg concludes that while the latter performed better than expected, Churchill’s often ad hoc interventions largely served to muddy the waters in Madrid and strengthen Franco’s hand, assuring Franco’s survival. Wigg, who spent nearly three decades based in Madrid for *The Times,* knows firsthand the cost to Spain of the postwar Franco regime.
Cramming a busy ninety years into twenty-four pages takes some doing. This large-print illustrated book breaks no new ground (would you really expect it to?) but provides a bright survey for elementary school readers. A time line running across the bottom of its pages helps build understanding—and needs to, since the text is sparse in the extreme (talk about making every word count).

The book covers “Winston’s” entire life—one suspects the title reference to the war is simply a means of attracting readers, since only five pages are devoted to it. Brevity leads to confusing comments in spots: Churchill, of course, never “flew round the world,” though his total mileage was at least the same distance. While brief, the book features a short glossary and index. Would that all “adult” books were so responsible! In all, this is a useful if very brief introduction for the newest Churchillians.


Yes to both questions. The film combines quotes with action, but not necessarily in sequence. However, according to Sir Martin Gilbert, Hugh Dalton and Churchill, something like these scenes did indeed happen.

Two questions: (1) When he spoke to the Cabinet vowing to fight on in 1940, after Churchill had expressed his determination to fight on, was noted by both Hugh Dalton and Sir Martin Gilbert, although each has his own account of what Churchill actually said:

Gilbert, Winston S. Churchill, vol. VI, Finest Hour 1939-1941 (London: Heinemann, 1983), 420: “If this long island story of ours is to end at last, let it end only when each of us lies choking in his own blood upon the ground.”

Dalton, The Fateful Years: Memoirs 1931-1945 (London: Muller, 1957), 385: “If at last this long story is to end, it were better it should end, not through surrender, but only when we are rolling senseless on the ground.” Churchill did not quote himself as above, but did write, in Their Finest Hour (London: Cassell, 1949), 88:

Then I said quite casually, not treating it as a point of special significance: “Of course, whatever happens at Dunkirk, we shall fight on.” There occurred a demonstration which, considering the character of the gathering—twenty-five experienced politicians and Parliament men, who represented all the different points of view, whether right or wrong, before the war—surprised me. Quite a number seemed to jump up from the table and come running to my chair, shouting and patting me on the back. There is no doubt that had I at this juncture faltered at all in the leading of the nation I should have been hurled out of office. I was sure that every Minister was ready to be killed quite soon, and have all his family and possessions destroyed, rather than give in.

Churchill’s recollection of the event has been challenged by critics, but (significantly) never by anyone present at that meeting. While some may have favored considering German terms, none favored surrender. See for example my book of quotations, Churchill by Himself (New York: Public Affairs, 2008), 485.

Likewise the theatre scene. Historians have noted that his countrymen often cheered Churchill after 1945, even if they didn’t vote Conservative. For example, consider Gerald Pawle, The War and Colonel Warden (London: Harrap, 1963) 105:

After he left Downing Street...wherever he went he was acclaimed with hysterical fervour. He attended a performance of Noel Coward’s comedy, Private Lives, and the entire audience rose and applauded him for several minutes as soon as he entered the theatre. At the end of the play John Clements made a moving speech about him from the stage, and once again the audience rose and cheered as though they would never stop.

Nor was this the first time the British, stiff upper lips notwithstanding, gave Churchill spontaneous standing ovations. Henry Pelling in Winston Churchill (London: Macmillan, 1974), 315, writes that in 1926, at the end of the General Strike...

...he was greeted with cries of “We want Winston!” and “Good old Churchill!” Such a demonstration was somewhat embarrassing, as the performance, which was of the musical Lady Be Good, had already begun. But the audience insisted on stopping the show, and Adele Astaire, Fred Astaire’s sister, who was on stage, called upon the audience to give three cheers for the Chancellor, who then “bowed his acknowledgements.”

The emotional outburst by the Cabinet on 28 May 1940, after Churchill had expressed his determination to fight on, was noted by both Hugh Dalton and Sir Martin Gilbert, although each has his own account of what Churchill actually said:

Finest Hour 144 / 41
On the Riviera

ANTOINE CAPET

Churchill at Monaco, by François Kersaudy, Éditions du Rocher, 112 pp., softbound, €17.10 from Amazon France (www.amazon.fr).

François Kersaudy, well known for his seminal Churchill and de Gaulle, offers a lighthearted yet solidly documented illustrated volume on Churchill’s love affair with Monaco—indeed the entire French Riviera from Cannes and Nice (whose airport serves Monaco) to the Italian frontier.

As First Lord of the Admiralty in February 1913, after signing a naval agreement with France, Churchill went to Monte Carlo for a few days’ rest with Clementine, enjoying its late-night casino sessions. After the war, wealthy friends with Riviera villas—the Laverays at Cap-d’Ail, and Consuelo Balsan (ex-wife of his cousin the ninth Duke of Marlborough) at Èze—invited him, and in late 1921 he attended a conference at Cannes and stayed at the Hôtel Negresco in Nice with Beaverbrook. The next year he rented a villa (“Rêve d’Or” or Golden Dream) at Cannes, occasionally traveling the coast on Beaverbrook’s yacht. His two main activities were painting in the afternoon and roulette at night.

The acquisition of Chartwell, and becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer, limited his overseas holidays after 1922, but from 1933, Churchill returned to the Riviera in grand style, accompanied by valet, secretaries, easel, several dozen suitcases and hat cases, staying at what would become his favourite Monte Carlo haunt, the Hôtel de Paris. He continued to visit wealthy connections: former actress Maxine Elliott at Golfe-Juan, Singer Sewing Machine heiress Daisy Fellowes and Lord Rothermere at Cap-Martin, or the Countess of Essex at Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat. In 1934 he returned with Randolph, who apparently lost even more than his father at the casino. In 1938 at Cap-Ferrat he met French foreign minister Pierre-Étienne Flandin, and in January 1939 his prestigious hosts were the Duke and Duchess of Windsor at Cap-Martin.

After a stay on Lake Como in Italy in autumn 1945, Hôtel de Paris welcomed him back, presenting him with a bottle of 1810 Napoleon brandy from cellars it had walled up during the war. Apparently General Eisenhower also had free use of a villa at Antibes, which he put at Churchill’s disposal.

In 1948, after a July stay at Aix-en-Provence with Clementine, Mary, and her husband Christopher Soames, he celebrated his fortieth wedding anniversary with Clementine at the Duke and Duchess of Windsor’s villa in September, also staying at Lord Beaverbrook’s “La Capponcina” in Cap-d’Ail, bought in 1940, with a splendid view of the Rock of Monaco. The Churchill family also spent the last days of 1948 and the early days of 1949 in the then-best suite of the Hôtel de Paris. In August 1949, while staying at “La Capponcina,” he had a minor stroke (see Michael Wardell, “Churchill’s Dagger,” Finest Hour 87, posted on our website).

Prime Minister again, Churchill was back at “La Capponcina” in September 1952, when he was made “Honorary Mayor” of the town. After a more serious stroke in June 1953, he went there to recover in September. Kersaudy includes Sir John Colville’s anecdote on how Churchill asked him to play chemin de fer at the casino by proxy (it would not do for Her Majesty’s Prime Minister to be seen gambling at Monte Carlo). Colville noted that the Italian money which WSC gave him (left over from the Lake Como expedition, apparently) was no longer legal tender, putting Jock in a very embarrassing situation. Churchill was there again in 1955.

A new venue was then added to Churchill’s list of luxury villas: “La Pausa” at Roquebrune, formerly owned by Coco Chanel, now the property of Emery Reves, Churchill’s dynamic literary agent. WSC’s main activities were painting and completing A History of the English-Speaking Peoples, along with roulette at the casino. He toyed with the idea of buying a villa himself, but apparently never seriously pursued it. Kersaudy provides an impressive list of the sparkling personalities Reves and his beautiful wife Wendy invited at “La Pausa” to please Churchill, including, in 1956, Aristotle Onassis, who would become his seagoing host on cruises aboard the yacht Christina.

From 1960, Churchill ceased visiting “La Pausa,” staying occasionally at “La Capponcina” but mostly at the Hôtel de Paris. His bad fall and broken hip in 1962 suggested that this had been his last stay, but he was back in April 1963, and again in June, to board Christina with his son Randolph and grandson Winston. This was his last visit to Monaco. The book ends with a photo of the dedication of Churchill’s bust, appropriately situated in Avenue de Grande-Bretagne, by Prince Rainier and Princess Grace with the sculptor, Oscar Nemon, on 19 May 1969.

Even Churchillian with a tolerable command of French will learn little new from the text, which is derived from familiar sources: the official biography, Mary Soames’ edition of her parents’ correspondence, and the memoirs of Jock Colville and Anthony Montague Browne, all of whom are acknowledged. Kersaudy did not write his entertaining volume for English-speaking Churchillian but for the French-speaking public, and it should be evaluated as such.

However, the photographic documentation is superb. Quite a number of the many photos were new to me, and it is a matter for speculation whether even the connoisseurs of the photographic canon will not find some hitherto unknown pictures, for instance, among those supplied by the Patrimoine Historique de la Société des Bains de Mer.

The photographs alone recommend this book to the libraries of Churchillian, particularly those interested in the private Churchill.
Gilbert Mark I
TED HUTCHINSON


“And here is the paper which bears [Hitler’s] name upon it as well as mine: We regard the agreement signed last night, and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, as symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war again.”
—Neville Chamberlain returning from Munich, Heston Aerodrome, 1 October 1938

“Darling Randy, Here is Martin Gilbert, an interesting researching historian young man, who loves Duff and hates the Coroner. He is full of zeal to set history right. Do see him.”

Reading The Appeasers is like finding a dusty childhood photograph of an old friend. The face is familiar, but you are startled by the youth staring back at you from the photograph. The Appeasers is the first book-length work written by Sir Martin Gilbert, co-authored with his good friend Richard Gott. The book is often credited (by Gilbert himself, among others) with influencing Randolph Churchill to hire Gilbert as a research assistant on Randolph’s multi-volume biography of his father; Randolph’s premature death, in 1968, in turn led to Martin Gilbert finishing the biography, writing scores of books and articles on Winston Churchill and, ultimately, becoming the leading Churchill scholar in the world. Thus, in the community of Winston Churchill scholarship, The Appeasers is a very important book.

Even seasoned Churchillians reading it for the first time may be surprised, however, to find that Churchill himself hardly appears in the volume. He looms like a giant presence offstage, watching the growing crisis with deep sadness, and waiting for his chance to step into the light. The book instead focuses its energies (as the title would indicate) on the “Men of Munich,” especially Neville Chamberlain (“the Coroner,” as Brendan Bracken dubbed him), Lord Halifax, and England’s prewar ambassador to Germany, Nevile Henderson.

Although the authors attempt to be evenhanded in portraying the Appeasers, it becomes clear early and often where their sympathies lie. Chamberlain can easily be seen as a vainglorious neophyte, playing far out of his league, dismissive of the opinions of the public and even his cabinet, with an antipathy for armed conflict that teetered dangerously close to cowardice. Halifax displays similar traits, and in addition is described as an unrepentant liar, willing to sell out any ally to avoid war. Henderson, who wrote his own apologia (Failure of a Mission, 1940), was almost childishly naive in his dealings with Hitler, and his most offensive remarks and predictions (most of them shockingly wrong) are embarrassingly recounted in detail.

The crux of the book, aside from its central mission as a narrative history of 1930s Appeasement, is that the “decline of democracy” described in the subtitle stemmed not just from Hitler’s actions but also from the reactions of Chamberlain and his inner circle. The Prime Minister and his minions often had the support of Parliament and the people, the authors say—but even when they did not, they would lie, cajole, and sell out anyone to get their way.

In spite of the book’s impressive pedigree, it can now only be viewed as superseded, a judgment that is almost inevitable considering its age. There have been more than fifty years of intense scholarship on Appeasement since the first edition was published. Most obviously, in spite of the authors’ best efforts to be evenhanded, the group under study (Chamberlain and Halifax in particular) can do almost nothing right. Their deeper motives are left unexplored, and the reader is thus left ignorant of Chamberlain’s wider concerns as war drew nearer, particularly his very real fears about how the British economy could sustain a long war against Germany. This topic has been explored best, in my view, in John Charmley’s Churchill: The End of Glory, a book that has its own very serious flaws.

The picture of Chamberlain and his cronies painted by the book is helpful, but it does not provide the full picture of Chamberlain’s decision-making process. Ultimately, of course, the authors are broadly correct that Chamberlain was very, very wrong about Hitler and his intentions. But a closer analysis of the issues which Chamberlain faced in the 1930s would better serve the reader as he struggles to understand Britain in the 1930s.

Of course, most of this blame cannot be laid at the feet of Gilbert and Gott. There is no question that they did not have the access to archival material that so many historians (including Gilbert himself) would have in the years to come, and Sir Martin has taken a more detached view of Chamberlain in his later works.

A book can hardly be criticized for being out-of-date when it is more than half a century old. Inevitably, however, The Appeasers is no longer an indispensable source. It is instead a bibliographically interesting look at what historians thought of the Appeasement era in the first two decades after the war—and a fascinating look at a great historian taking his first steps into a world he would come to dominate.
The Making and Unmaking of the Anglo-Irish Treaty

A CASTLE OF SAND BUILT ON MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND WISHFUL THINKING:

TO QUOTE THE HISTORIAN T. DESMOND WILLIAMS, “BY THE TIME THE BRITISH HAD FOUND THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION, THE IRISH HAD LOST ALL INTEREST.”

ALAN J. WARD

During the drafting of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, Churchill was a Liberal minister in the coalition government of David Lloyd George. He also chaired the sub-group that prepared the naval and air components of the Treaty. More importantly, because there was no minister responsible for relations with British Dominions until 1925, the work fell to Churchill as Colonial Secretary. He was therefore intimately involved in writing the Irish Free State Constitution, completed in June 1922. The end of the coalition, and Churchill’s loss of his seat in the 1922 general election, spelled the end to his official involvement, though not his interest, in the Irish Free State.

Meeting Jaw to Jaw

As discussed in the last issue, by the summer of 1921 fighting had worsened in Ireland and the two sides were in a stalemate. Churchill’s position was that massive increases in the British military presence should not occur unless his government offered “the widest measure of self-government to Ireland.”

The moment was finally right. The IRA knew it could not win a conventional war against an augmented British military. The British Cabinet had no desire to commit to one, given its many other problems at home and abroad (see John Maurer’s following paper). Lloyd George had already brought Sinn Fein’s leader, Eamon de Valera, and Unionist leader, Sir James Craig, together for secret talks in May, but on 24 June he publicly invited de Valera and Craig to further talks. After negotiations the British Cabinet and Dáil Éireann Executive agreed on a truce to begin on 11 July 1921. There followed an extremely tough negotiation in London between October and December between a committee of the British Cabinet, including Churchill, and an Irish delegation led by Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins. Craig did not participate, but was kept informed.

The talks were technically without preconditions, which worried Churchill, who believed the Irish should first accept the Crown and membership in the British Commonwealth. Lloyd George made this position clear to de Valera, President of the Irish Executive, in personal meetings and letters, but de Valera replied that he would only negotiate as the head of an established Irish Republic. He would accept no role for the Crown in an Irish Free State and would accept only “external association” with the Commonwealth, not full membership. In the end the chasm between the two was gently pushed aside. Both sides began to negotiate with the understanding that each had stated its positions clearly. The lead British negotiators were Lloyd George, Lord Birkenhead and Austen Chamberlain. Churchill was not one because of his reluctance to make concessions to Sinn Fein, but he chaired the sub-committee on naval and air clauses of an agreement, he signed the Treaty, and key meetings took place at his London house.

With the Irish Unionists now protected by their own provincial parliament in Belfast (as a result of the 1920 Government of Ireland Act), Britain could think about a more ambitious settlement for southern Ireland than conventional Home Rule. Why not offer Dominion status, a designation used to describe Australia, Canada and New Zealand since 1907 and South Africa since 1909: independent states under a single Crown? On 5 December the Irish delegation, faced with a threat from Lloyd George to reopen the war in Ireland, accepted most of the “Articles of Agreement for a Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland,” although Britain had never accepted that Ireland existed as a political entity. Churchill was present when Lloyd George issued his ultimatum and was one of the British signatories to the Treaty early on the morning of 6
December. It provided for a twenty-six county Dominion known as the Irish Free State. Northern Ireland would be allowed to opt in, something it quickly chose not to do, and a boundary commission would determine boundary adjustments between Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State.6

The most important constitutional provision of the Treaty for Britain was Article 1, which stated that the Irish Free State would have the constitutional status of a Dominion within the British Commonwealth, with King George V as head of state. In addition, all the members of the Irish government would swear an oath of allegiance to the Treaty and to the Crown, and Britain would have rights to naval and air bases in the Free State, provisions that Churchill had personally negotiated.7 Churchill believed that the Treaty gave Ireland the substance of independence, notwithstanding the role of the Crown and the imposition of these bases.8

**Mixed Receptions**

In Dublin the treaty dramatically divided both the Irish Cabinet, which affirmed it by only four votes to three, and the Dáil Éireann, which approved by sixty-four votes to fifty-seven. Eamon De Valera resigned as President of the Dáil Éireann Executive and Ireland entered into a civil war between the pro- and anti-Treaty factions of Sinn Fein, which ended only in May 1923. By then a constitution had been accepted, the pro-Treaty faction had received the endorsement of a majority of Irish voters, and the Irish Free State had been formally established on 6 December 1922.

Following the Treaty, Britain continued to deny the legitimacy of an Irish state in a very petty way by refusing to recognize either the Dáil Éireann or the Dáil Executive. Instead, Arthur Griffith, who succeeded de Valera as the Executive’s President, was required to call an ad hoc meeting of the southern Parliament in May 1921 to approve the Treaty and elect a Provisional Government. Southern Ireland therefore had two executives, the Dáil Executive chaired by Griffith, and the Provisional Government of the Irish Free State chaired by Collins. They worked essentially as one but it was to Collins and the Provisional Government that power was transferred on 16 January 1922.9

After the Treaty was signed, responsibility for Irish affairs were transferred to Churchill, the Colonial Secretary, by the Irish Chief Secretary, Sir Hamar Greenwood, in anticipation of the Irish Free State becoming a Dominion. Churchill therefore became the lead Cabinet minister on Ireland and chaired a Cabinet committee to deal with the Irish Provisional Government. In this capacity he truly excelled.10 As he put it in a speech introducing the Irish Free State Bill in the House of Commons on 16 February: “Ulster must have British comfort and protection. Ireland must have her Treaty, her election and her constitution.”11

Placing the Irish Free State on a constitutional footing according to the terms of the Treaty was difficult because of the Irish Civil War. The Irish plan to raise an army from pro-Treaty members of the IRA was only slowly completed in 1922, and an Irish police force was also slow to develop. General Macready later wrote,

> The optimistic imagination of Mr. Winston Churchill that the acceptance of the Treaty would result in a cessation of disturbance and a loyal interpretation of its terms was by no means shared by the Crown forces in Ireland, who were fated to endure another twelve months of anxiety and humiliation and who appreciated the future situation with considerable accuracy.12

Despite continuing unrest in Ireland, Churchill, wishing to give credibility to the Dublin government, decided to transfer Irish revenues to the Provisional Government immediately and to withdraw as many British forces as possible quickly and ostentatiously. British army units were withdrawn, or assigned to barracks outside Dublin; on Churchill’s instructions they were to used only on the advice of Irish ministers. The Provisional Government did not actually start to control security until the summer of 1922.13 Until then it >>

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4. Curran, 73.
6. For details of the Anglo-Irish Treaty see Ward, The Irish Constitutional Tradition, 163-64.
was torn between waging all-out war against anti-Treaty forces and offering concessions to bring them into the Treaty process. Churchill urged the Provisional Government to take a hard line, largely because if the Provisional Government were seen to be weak, he was in danger if losing his leverage with the Ulster Unionists and British Tories. The Treaty could easily have failed because of opposition in the London Parliament. Churchill was never sanguine about the Provisional Government’s military capabilities, but in public he expressed confidence in Griffith and Collins even as he insisted that they must carry out the Treaty’s terms.

Bucking up the Provisional Government
Protecting the interests of Northern Ireland proved difficult for Churchill because the province came under border attacks from the anti-Treaty IRA, and Catholics in Belfast came under heavy retaliatory attacks from Unionist gangs. Churchill spent a great deal of time fielding complaints from North and South about the behavior of the other. He found himself mollifying both, pressing them to control extremists, and using threats from time to time. He particularly urged each side to understand the extraordinary pressures the other was under. Unless their leaders each exercised restraint, he warned, their opposite numbers would be engulfed by extremists and any chance of a peaceful settlement would disappear.

Churchill occasionally brought the leaders of the two governments together in London to hammer out agreements. He repeatedly told the Provisional Government that if it did not make progress in the Civil War, the British would abandon the Treaty and reoccupy Ireland. But he also refused to give Ulster all the rifles it requested, and he insisted that Craig’s government should do more to prevent attacks on Catholics. He rejected Craig’s position that the North should make no territorial concessions to the Irish Free State in a Boundary Commission. Churchill assumed that the commission would make substantial territorial adjustments in favor of the South in two Catholic-majority northern counties, Fermanagh and Tyrone. Indeed, he thought the loss of territory might be sufficient to lead Northern Ireland to join the South in a united Ireland.

In Parliament Churchill moved the Irish Free State bill with remarkable dispatch. It was introduced on 16 February 1922 and received the Royal Assent on 31 March. He was successful in holding all the major players, in Ireland, Ulster and Britain, to the Treaty, in part with impressive speeches in the House of Commons, particularly his introduction of the Irish Free State Bill in February 1922 and his speech after the murder of the former Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir Henry Wilson, in June 1922.

Churchill’s crisis in Ireland came between April and June 1922. The Provisional Government’s military situation became so serious that Churchill made plans to hold as much of the country as possible with British troops should the Provisional Government lose control, and to embargo British imports into Ireland. On 13 April 1922 anti-Treaty forces occupied the courts of justice (Four Courts) in central Dublin. Churchill, who had arranged for the Provisional Government to receive at least 13,000 rifles and other equipment from the British army, urged it to retake the courts, although he...
appreciated that Irish ministers feared that an all-out attack on the building would provoke total civil war.\textsuperscript{21} Their inaction was greeted with extreme skepticism by Conservatives and Unionists in Britain, and this was compounded when Wilson was assassinated. Churchill never lost confidence in Griffith, Collins, or other Irish ministers, such as William Cosgrave and Kevin O’Higgins,\textsuperscript{22} but he was forced to speak harshly about the Provisional Government in the Commons to counter Unionist critics, and urged Irish leaders to take the military initiative. The Irish did not, in fact, move against the Four Courts until the commander-in-chief of the Irish Free State army, General O’Connor, was kidnapped by republicans. The British Cabinet ordered Macready to clear the building with British troops on 25 June, a decision that Macready believed was “flavored strongly of Mr. Winston Churchill’s feverish impetuosity.” Macready stalled and successfully petitioned the Cabinet to reverse the policy.\textsuperscript{23}

On 28 June, using field guns supplied by General Macready with Churchill’s support,\textsuperscript{24} Free State forces opened fire, and the Four Courts were finally cleared on 5 July. This allowed the Free State to liberate the building itself in what proved to be a pivotal event in the civil war.\textsuperscript{25} An attack by Macready’s forces, as Churchill had wanted in the days following Wilson’s assassination, would have had an appalling effect on the Provisional Government’s standing in Ireland.

**The Pact with the Dev**

During the spring of 1922, Churchill pressed the Provisional Government at every opportunity to hold elections for a new Irish Parliament as soon as possible. He believed elections would allow the Irish people to endorse the Treaty, and that this would prevent the Free State from slipping into anti-Treaty hands by default. He also feared that delay might tempt the Provisional Government to make concessions to de Valera to bring him into the government before the Irish people had a chance to vote.\textsuperscript{26}

Collins did exactly this on 20 May 1922, announcing an electoral pact with de Valera by which the pro- and anti-Treaty factions would divide the seats in the proposed Free State Parliament by sixty-four to fifty-seven, and seats in the government by five to four. Churchill discovered that something of this kind was in the wind a week earlier, and on 15 May wrote an angry letter to Collins, denouncing the agreement as “an outrage upon democratic principles.”\textsuperscript{27} At a meeting with Griffith and Collins in London he insisted that a deal would undermine the Anglo-Irish settlement and the legitimacy of the Provisional Government, and predicted that anti-Treaty ministers would not swear an oath to uphold the Treaty, as required by that document.

Griffith insisted that anti-Treaty ministers would be “external ministers,” a special category of non-Cabinet minister in the Constitution being developed, and would not have to sign the oath. Churchill had not yet seen the draft constitution, but he was not persuaded by this argument. He was moved, however, by the Irish leaders’ insistence that without the pact, anti-Treaty forces could cripple the election.\textsuperscript{28} On this ground, Churchill defended the pact in the Cabinet, and in the House of Commons on 31 May.\textsuperscript{29} But by the time a general election was held on 16 June, the pact had been abandoned by the Provisional Government and Churchill had forced the Irish to revise their draft constitution in ways that could never have satisfied de Valera.\textsuperscript{30}

**Draft and Redraft**

Churchill received a copy of the draft Free State Constitution on 27 May 1922. Prepared in March by a distinguished committee, it was a sophisticated, crafty document which exploited the confusion about the constitutional status of Dominions and the British Commonwealth. The Anglo-Irish Treaty required the Irish Free State to be a British Dominion under the Crown, within the British Commonwealth of Nations. But no one knew precisely what either the Commonwealth or a Dominion meant in constitutional terms. The term “Dominion” was coined to describe four British colonies that had advanced to virtual independence, but their constitutions were unchanged by >>

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15. Ibid., 325-28.
17. Gilbert, 710.
18. Gilbert, 716; Curran, 133.
19. Gilbert, 705; Curran, 182-83.
20. Gilbert, 694, 704, 710.
21. Ibid., 713.
30. See Ward, 175-77.
THE MAKING AND UNMAKING...

this recognition, and were essentially colonial. The British Crown still had enormous formal powers, and there was nothing in law to prevent the British government from intervening in a Dominion matter through its advice to the King.

The British Commonwealth dates from 1917, when Britain and the Dominions formed a Commonwealth of co-equal states. It was not coterminous with the British Empire, which included all of Britain’s remaining colonies, but the two terms were used almost interchangeably for years thereafter. It was not clear how co-equality would be combined with Dominion constitutions that allowed the Crown to intervene in their affairs. Lloyd George told the Irish delegates in October 1921 that the Dominions were co-equals, but the UK would prevail in any disagreements over an imperial matter, and no Dominion might remain neutral in time of war.

But what was an imperial matter? Lloyd George would not answer this because, he said, it would be “difficult and dangerous.” I think the answers would have exposed the fact that the only thing holding the British Commonwealth together was a symbol—a shared Crown whose powers had already withered.

Such problems led to an anomaly in the Anglo-Irish Treaty. “All we can say,” said Lloyd George, “is that whatever measure of freedom Dominion status gives to Canada, Australia, New Zealand or South Africa, that will be extended to Ireland.” Article 2 of the Anglo-Irish Treaty simply referred to Canada: “the law, practice and constitutional usage” affecting the Crown in Canada would govern the Crown in the Irish Free State.” But what did “law, practice and constitutional usage” mean?

On the one hand, Canadian constitutional law recognized neither the Prime Minister nor the Cabinet. On the other hand, 20th century Canadian practice was that the real executive was the Canadian Cabinet; the Governor General acted almost without exception on the advice of Canadian not British ministers. Royal powers were essentially reserve powers, to be used in a crisis, which no-one could define or predict.

Faced with this contradiction, the Irish Provisional Government decided to write a constitution based on practice. By this means it hoped that the Crown might be excluded from the Constitution and de Valera might be able to support it. The draft Free State Constitution presented to Churchill on 27 May 1922 recognized the sovereignty of the people, contained no oath of allegiance to the Crown, and contained no reference to a Governor-General as representative of the sovereign. Instead the King’s representative in Ireland was described as “the Commissioner of the British Commonwealth,” essentially a Commonwealth ambassador, with no powers in Irish affairs. Executive powers, including the power to declare war and ratify treaties, were assigned to an Executive Council elected by Dáil Éireann, not to the Crown. Finally, the constitution made no provision that Irish court decisions could be appealed to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London, the highest court for all the other Dominions.

Lloyd George, astounded, described the draft as setting up “an independent republic.” Churchill thought it was a Bolshevik document, totally unacceptable. Hugh Kennedy, the Irish Provisional Government’s legal adviser, and the British Lord Chief Justice, Gordon Hewart, were told to rewrite it. They did this in about three weeks, and their work brought the Constitution into line with most of Churchill’s expectations concerning Crown and the Commonwealth.

A new draft was approved by the Provisional Government on 15 June and by the British Cabinet the next morning, election day for the first Irish Free State Parliament. It was later approved by both the British and Irish parliaments. The Irish implementing legislation
stated that the Constitution must be “construed with reference to” the Anglo-Irish Treaty, which meant, among other things, that the provisions for British naval and air bases in Ireland, which had been Churchill’s personal contribution to the Treaty, received indirect recognition. The Constitution itself recognized the Irish Free State as “a co-equal member of the Community of Nations forming the British Commonwealth.” Executive powers were vested in the sovereign and his representative, the Governor-General, who had authority to refuse his assent to an act of Parliament or refer it to the sovereign. Members of Parliament were required to sign an oath of allegiance to the sovereign, and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council became the highest court for Irish appeals. 39

The Dáil lost the power to ratify treaties. This was to be a royal prerogative, as in the other Dominions. But in a major concession, Article 49 provided that the Free State could not participate in any war without the consent of the Irish Parliament, “save in case of actual invasion.” And in another huge concession, Britain agreed that the Irish Prime Minister would be appointed by the Governor-General on the nomination of Dáil Éireann. This was the first recognition in law anywhere in the British Empire of the constitutional rule that the lower house of Parliament selects the Prime Minister. In the other Dominions the appointment of ministers was at the discretion of the sovereign. 38

**Castle of Sand**

With the adoption of the Constitution, Churchill’s work in Ireland was substantially complete. He was defeated in the election of October 1922 and was not in office to see the establishment of the Irish Free State on 6 December 1922, but he had seen it through its significant mileposts: the Anglo-Irish Treaty, the drafting of a constitution, and a general election. Churchill’s bulldog tenacity had kept the process moving forward in the face of huge challenges from all sides. Before he was killed by anti-Treaty forces in August 1922, Michael Collins, who had certainly not warmed to Churchill at their first meetings in 1921, sent a message: “Tell Winston we could never have done anything without him.” 39

But the Irish settlement for which Churchill fought so tenaciously, including the 1920 Government of Ireland Act, was a castle of sand built on misunderstandings and wishful thinking. The 1920 Act was not a success and had absolutely no chance of satisfying Sinn Fein in the South. But it brought Home Rule to a Northern Ireland that had never sought it, and then abused it.

Like Lloyd George, Churchill always assured Irish Nationalists that his goal was a united Ireland. Before World War I he said that “whatever Ulster’s rights may be, she cannot stand in the way of the whole of the rest of Ireland.” 40 But as a member of the Cabinet, he agreed to the Unionists’ demand for a six-county Northern Ireland which included two counties with Catholic majorities, 41 and he never had a concrete plan for bringing Ulster into the Irish Free State.

At best Churchill hoped that Article 44 of the Constitution, which permitted the Free State to create subordinate legislatures, would lead Northern Ireland to join the Free State as a Home Rule province. But this was wishful thinking, and just days after the Free State was established, the Northern Parliament exercised its right, under Article 12 of the Treaty, to reject a union. 42

Churchill also hoped that the Boundary Commission would take so much land from the north that its leaders would accept that the province was not viable, but the Northern Ireland Prime Minister, Sir James Craig, rejected this possibility, and in 1925 the Boundary Commission accepted the legitimacy of Northern Ireland and proposed only minor, technical, adjustments to the border. 43

The province of Northern Ireland created in 1921 therefore became, it was thought, permanent. Like the Home Rule bills in 1886, 1893 and 1912, which dealt with all of Ireland, the Government of Ireland Act explicitly declared the supremacy of the Parliament at Westminster, even in matters devolved to the regional parliament. Hitherto this provision was meant to assure Ulster Unionists that Britain would intervene should a Catholic-dominated Dublin parliament abuse their rights. The tables were turned in 1920: now the provision could be read as guaranteeing Catholics protection from a Protestant-dominated Parliament in Belfast. But Churchill himself undermined this guarantee.

**The Cabinet Blinks**

In July 1922, the Governor of Northern Ireland, the Duke of Abercorn, acting on instructions from the Cabinet, refused the Royal Assent to a Northern Ireland bill abolishing proportional representation in local elections. This was a matter within the jurisdiction of the Northern Parliament, but it undermined Catholic representation in local government and provoked fierce >>
opposition from the Irish Provisional Government. Here was a major flaw in Home Rule. If Britain refused the Royal Assent to a Northern Ireland bill and the Belfast government resigned in protest, there would be no government to replace it which could command majority support. Britain would therefore have to withdraw its objection or assume direct rule of the province from London—something it did not want to do.

The British Cabinet blinked: It approved the Royal Assent to the disputed bill. Churchill assured the Irish Provisional Government that the change in the electoral system would have no influence on Nationalist representation in northern local government—but if so, why had the Cabinet told the Governor to kill it? Churchill made matters worse by telling the Provisional Government that withholding the Royal Assent would “create a precedent limiting for the future the powers of Dominion Parliaments” who had been assured that Britain would no longer intervene in their domestic affairs.

This was constitutional nonsense because Northern Ireland was not a Dominion; it was a province of the United Kingdom. Its parliament was explicitly subordinate to the Westminster Parliament. As the Provisional Government told Churchill, Britain had agreed that there would be only one Dominion in Ireland, the Irish Free State, “therefore no arguments with reference to Dominion legislation can affect this question.”

Nonetheless, in 1929 Northern Ireland was permitted to abolish proportional representation in its parliamentary elections, too. Despite the legal subordination of the province, Churchill, by his inaction in 1922, had created a convention of British non-intervention in its affairs. This was reinforced in 1923 when the Speaker of the House of Commons decided to permit no questions to ministers or motions on subjects devolved to Northern Ireland.

Henceforward until 1968, when the government of Harold Wilson threatened to invoke Article 75 to force Northern Ireland to adopt reforms, the province was treated, and often treated itself, as if it were a Dominion, immune from British intervention. Ultimately that led to the Northern Ireland civil rights campaign of the 1960s. But Article 75 was not actually invoked until the government of Edward Heath suspended the Northern Ireland Parliament in 1972.

Churchill’s Dilemmas

There can be two explanations for Churchill’s behavior in this case. Either he was trying to rationalize his surrender to the Northern Ireland Government, or he really did not understand the difference between Home Rule and Dominion status. I suspect there were elements of both. Churchill and his Cabinet colleagues did not want to take back direct control of Northern Ireland, but they also appeared not to know what a Dominion was.

In the Treaty negotiations, Lloyd George and Churchill both told Irish delegates that Britain and the Dominions were co-equals, but they also insisted that the Dominions would have to defer to Britain on imperial matters and that no Dominion could remain neutral in a British war. However, Churchill himself negotiated British control of three treaty ports in Ireland, denying that this would infringe on Irish sovereignty. And before Timothy Healy was appointed as the first Irish Governor-General, he was required to give the British Government a written assurance that he would not assent to a Free State bill without consulting the Colonial Secretary, then Churchill, should he suspect it violated Ireland’s commitments to the Treaty. It was even anomalous that the Colonial Secretary had responsibility for Northern Ireland, which was neither a colony nor a Dominion.

In view of these reservations, one has to ask whether Ireland and the other Dominions were co-equals of Britain or not? In practice, of course, the Dominions were co-equals because Britain could no longer compel them to do what they otherwise would not do. Hugh Kennedy, the Provisional Government’s legal adviser, was absolutely right in 1922 when he told Churchill and Lloyd George that it was inconceivable Britain could stop Canada from adopting a republican constitution if it so chose. But Churchill and his colleagues could not, or would not, admit this in public, because it would have exposed the hollowness of the British Empire, which Churchill worshipped.

Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins understood what Churchill did not; that Dominion status was a flawed concept which they could accept with little risk. De Valera, typically, took things too literally when he exclaimed, “I say in a Treaty words do mean something, else why should they be put down?” Collins knew better when he told Dáil Éireann in January 1922 that the Anglo-Irish Treaty was not “the ultimate freedom that all nations aspire and develop to, but the freedom to achieve it.” He died a few months later, before he was proven right.

The End of the Affair

Three things combined to destroy the Anglo-Irish Treaty in less than twenty years. First, Britain insisted that Ireland would be a Dominion, but a Dominion like no other. Political leaders in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand were friends of Britain and loyal to the Crown. But Irish Free State leaders shared a long antipathy to Britain and disloyalty to the Crown. One could reasonably anticipate that they would exploit anything that might enhance their formal independence.

The first Free State governments, led by William Cosgrave, did not attempt to change the Treaty or the
Constitution by confrontation. But once de Valera became Prime Minister in 1932 he went after the imperial parts of the Constitution with a vengeance. “Let us remove these forms one by one,” he said, “so that this State that we control may be a Republic in fact…”

In 1932 he nominated a party loyalist to be Governor-General, required him to live in a Dublin suburb, not the Vice-Regal Lodge, and allowed him no role in the ceremonial life in the state. He simply came into Dublin from time to time to sign documents. In 1933 de Valera removed the oath of allegiance to the Crown from the Constitution and abolished Irish appeals to the Privy Council. In 1936 he removed all references to the Crown from the Constitution, and thereby, it seems inadvertently, abolished the office of Governor-General. In 1937 he was responsible for a new Irish constitution that was completely republican.

By a separate Irish act of Parliament, which was designed to permit the country to remain in the Commonwealth, Ireland retained the King to act for Ireland in appointing diplomatic officers and signing agreements, but only on the advice of Irish ministers. In 1938 Britain agreed to leave the Treaty ports, over Churchill’s objections in Parliament, and when Ireland declared its neutrality when World War II broke out in 1939, Deirdre McMahon concluded, “the chickens of 1921 were coming home to roost with a vengeance.”

Britain objected to what it insisted were de Valera’s violations of the Treaty, but it could do nothing without reoccupying Ireland, which was out of the question, and as Paul Canning writes, “Issues once thought so important had… become constitutional niceties.”

Ireland and the Crown

The second element destructive of the Anglo-Irish Treaty and Ireland’s formal relationship with Britain and the Crown was several articles in the Free State Constitution which Churchill accepted but which undermined the Crown. Article 2 recognized the sovereignty of the people, not the sovereignty of Parliament or the Crown. Article 28 said that Dáil Éireann might only be dissolved on the advice of the Irish government. In the other Dominions the dissolution was a power of the Governor-General.

In Article 49 the Free State could only be committed to war by its own Parliament, except in case of invasion. In the other Dominions, war was a royal prerogative. Indeed, in 1914, every Dominion had gone to war on the declaration of war by Britain, and Australia followed this precedent in 1939. In Article 51 executive authority was exercised by the King, but in accordance with the “law, practice and constitutional usage” of Canada, where the King acted on the advice of the Government. And in Article 53 the Government was appointed by the Governor-General on the nomination of Dáil Éireann. In every other Dominion the law gave the Governor-General the power to form a government without reference to Parliament. Given that Churchill and his colleagues accepted these articles, we have to ask what they were thinking. In 1921 they threatened total war to impose the Crown on the Irish but then accepted an emasculated Crown in the Free State Constitution.

Toward Full Independence

The third destructive element was that in the 1920s Ireland and the other Dominions asserted their independence individually and collectively to redefine the British Empire without amending a single constitution. Ireland, for example, joined the League of Nations in 1923. In 1924 Ireland registered the Anglo-Irish Treaty with the League, accredited its first diplomat to the USA, and issued its own passports. In 1931, when the Irish Free State signed a treaty of Commerce and Navigation with Portugal, it was an Irish Minister who advised King George V to sign it, for the first time—not a British minister, which was the practice until then. >>

44. Ward, 125.
45. Ibid., 125-30.
46. Ibid., 171.
47. Ibid., 175.
49. Ward, 163.
50. Ward, 225.
51. Ibid., 224-33.
THE MAKING AND UNMAKING...

More importantly, between 1926 and 1931 a series of imperial conferences attended by Britain and the Dominions established new rules for the Dominions’ relationships with Britain. David Harkness writes that the objective of the Irish government in this process “was full and unrestricted sovereignty; their method became the peaceful transformation of the British Empire so that the definition of Dominion status might be synonymous with fullest freedom.”

Until these conferences, Governors General were local heads of state acting on local advice and representatives of Britain, ambassadors de facto, acting on British advice. Now Governors General would act on the advice of Dominion ministers and a new diplomatic class, High Commissioners, would act for Britain and each of the Dominions in dealings with each other.

In addition, Governors General would be appointed on the recommendation of Dominion governments, not the British Government, the practice of reserving bills to London for the royal assent, or of the sovereign disallowing a Dominion act, would cease, any law touching on the succession to the throne would require the assent of Britain and all the Dominions, and no British law would bind a Dominion except by its own choice. These changes were combined in a comprehensive British Act of Parliament, the Statute of Westminster, which amounted to a constitutional revolution. In Ireland they were the work of William Cosgrave’s pro-Treaty government, before de Valera took office in 1932.

Churchill’s Dilemma

Churchill had played a major role in the Irish Treaty, but within ten years he found himself floundering in the face of onslaughts by Ireland and the other Dominions on values he had thought worth going to war for in 1921. He excoriated Britain’s withdrawal from the Treaty ports in 1938, and insisted that Ireland’s World War II neutrality was illegal. Because the King was Ireland’s sovereign, and since the King was at war with Germany, Ireland was necessarily at war, too.

Churchill appeared not to comprehend that the King had not been Ireland’s head of state since 1936—and that the Irish Constitution he’d consented to in 1922 gave war powers to the Dáil Éireann.

There is one more thing to mention about the redefinition of Ireland’s relationship with Britain, although it trespasses on the subject matter of other presentations. In 1948, the Irish government introduced the Republic of Ireland Act, by which Ireland formally became a republic in 1949. In the words of the Irish Prime Minister, John Costello, this ended “forever, in a simple, clear and unequivocal way this country’s long and tragic association with the institution of the British Crown.”

Ireland also ceased its relationship with the British Commonwealth of Nations.

In 1921 Britain had categorically rejected de Valera’s proposal that Britain should recognize an Irish republic having “an external association” with the British Commonwealth. Yet in 1949, Ireland became a republic outside the Commonwealth, while in January 1950 India became a republic within the Commonwealth. It is true, to quote the historian T. Desmond Williams, that “by the time the British had found the answer, the Irish had lost interest in the question.”

55. See Ward, 213-16.
56. Joseph Carroll, Ireland in the War Years (New York: Crane, Russak, 1975), 30-31. This was the position adopted by the Australian Government.
57. Quoted in Ward, 251.
In the morning of 11 October 1921, crowds described as “half-hysterical” cheered the arrival of British and Irish delegates at Ten Downing Street to decide “how the association of Ireland with the Community of Nations known as the British Empire may best be reconciled with Irish national aspirations.” After more than two years of guerrilla war, tension had given way to hope.

Upon the delegates lay the responsibility of forever resolving the Anglo-Irish relationship. Eight grueling weeks later, in the small hours of 6 December, they signed a document described as the first treaty ever between “the two democracies.” British supremacy over Ireland, first claimed 750 years before, virtually ended. History had been made, and among those present to sign his agreement was 47-year-old Winston Churchill.

As Alan Ward has shown, Churchill played a big part in the ratification and implementation of the Treaty, but his role in the negotiations of the Treaty itself was more peripheral. His major contribution was to chair the sub-committee drafting the defence provisions. While important, these did not constitute the main issues.

Nevertheless, Churchill was a close observer of all that took place. One of the most important meetings occurred in his own home, and in his book The Aftermath he left a first-hand account of events. Finally, the Treaty determined both short-term and long-term aspects of Churchill’s career. His role in the making of the document, therefore, is important to understand.

The decision to call a truce to hostilities and enter into negotiations took place three months before the delegates finally gathered. Prime Minister David Lloyd George took the step, with the strong support of Churchill, then Colonial Secretary: they were the leading Liberal members of a Coalition government that depended on the support of a Conservative majority.

**Backgrounds**

The 1912 Irish Home Rule Bill, which might have led to civil war, was precluded by the start of World War I, which had the effect of making Lloyd George prime minister in 1916. His Coalition easily won the general election after the war, but served at the pleasure of the Conservative majority led by Andrew Bonar Law. He could have formed a purely Tory government, but at the time he considered Lloyd George indispensable. Thus, neither Liberals nor Conservatives could simply have their way over Ireland.

The Coalition’s 1920 Government of Ireland Act satisfied the primary concern of Bonar Law, a Canadian-born Scot of Ulster antecedents. It set the stage for an all-Ireland solution that all of Britain would support. Unfortunately no settlement in sight was >>

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1. Frank Pakenham (later Lord Longford), Peace by Ordeal (London: Cape, 1935), 121; formal terms of discussion are quoted on 88.
2. Ibid., 3.
Churchill preferred “smashing” the Republicans first and take place with the Irish without tacitly admitting that the British Empire was “an open question.” Typically, Churchill preferred “smashing” the Republicans first and then offering them generous terms as a Dominion. This, he argued, was how Britain had settled its dilemma in South Africa. The same policy could be applied to Ireland, and any resumption of hostilities “would not be much worse than what has gone on before.”

The Negotiators

But Lloyd George decided to resume discussions unconditionally. This led to the invitation which brought about the Treaty conference of October 1921. De Valera replied, “...the Irish Republic would be glad to discuss this question.” While de Valera may have believed that he had scored tacit recognition of his beloved republic, his acceptance also meant tacit Irish recognition of partition, since he knew what the British were willing to put on the table. Lloyd George studiously ignored de Valera’s republican terminology.

Churchill welcomed the coming talks but stressed in a speech to his Dundee constituents that Dominion status was the only option open to southern Ireland. The reason, he insisted, involved national security. “Great Britain would always live in apprehension,” he said, that an Irish republic would be “intriguing against us with foreign countries, giving submarine bases, or providing facilities for strangling our life and trade.” As a former First Lord of the Admiralty, Churchill knew how much Britain had depended on southern Irish ports to grapple with the U-boats. His fears were justified. The historian Mary Bromage explained that Churchill’s dealings with Ireland were driven by the imperative of defence of the realm. “More than once,” Bromage concluded, Churchill “changed course but never his objective.”

Churchill supported a generous settlement for Ireland in part because he believed the Irish would then rally to the support of Britain during any future crisis, just as the South Africans had done in 1914. “Our settlement with the Boers,” Churchill wrote, “was my greatest source of comfort and inspiration in this Irish business.” But Ireland was not South Africa.

Britain’s political leadership had come a long way, but it was not far enough. De Valera, wrote his biogra-
pher, Tim Pat Coogan, “knew what Lloyd George was putting on the table—it did not, could not and would not contain a republic.” But “the Dev” was committed to his eyelids to the republican ideal. “Whoever went to London to negotiate with Lloyd George,” Coogan wrote, “would be forced to compromise, and [to] be compromised.”

De Valera would not be that person—but unlike Chamberlain, Birkenhead and Lloyd George, he would not jeopardize his political future. He opted to sit out “the most important set of negotiations ever conducted between the Irish and the English,” sending instead a delegation he hoped would be rigged for failure, leaving him the uncompromised leader of Republican forces. Speaking to a colleague in a rare unguarded moment, de Valera explained: “We must have scapegoats.”

The scapegoats were Arthur Griffith, founder of Sinn Fein and chairman of the Irish delegation; Michael Collins, the Republican military leader; Eamonn Duggan and George Gavan Duffy, both lawyers; and Robert Barton, a staunch republican, with his cousin the novelist Erskine Childers and John Chartres as secretaries. De Valera afterwards said he knew Griffith and Collins would settle for a Dominion. Duggan and Duffy he dismissed as “legal padding.” Barton, however, would serve as “a retarding force,” with Childers present to give him “added strength.” The Dev himself would remain in Dublin, ostensibly as a bargaining ploy for his delegates in London to utilize as necessary. Thus de Valera hoped to neutralize Collins as a challenger to his status to be a priceless “stepping stone.” Once autonomous, an Irish Dominion could not only move toward a republic; it could use force against the six northern counties to unify Ireland under a single government. This in fact is exactly what Collins tried to do, during the brief months left to him after the conclusion of the Treaty. Yet Griffith and Collins understood that by accepting a Dominion they would not only be sacrificing their political careers, but possibly their lives.

The British negotiators were led by Lloyd George, Chamberlain, Birkenhead and Churchill, along with Secretary of State for War Sir Laming Worthington-Evans, Attorney General Sir Gordon Hewart and the Chief Secretary for Ireland Sir Hamar Greenwood. The last three did not play significant roles. Greenwood, in fact, was so despised in Ireland that “telling a Hamar” had recently become a popular Irish euphemism for lying. The British delegation, however, received crucial staff support from “two of the most brilliant public servants of the century”: Lionel Curtis and the Cabinet Secretary Tom Jones.

“What a team it must have been,” Lord Longford wrote of the British delegation, “that could relegate to fourth place in its councils Winston Churchill.” The reason: Churchill was not a party leader. Chamberlain and Birkenhead were, representing their party in the Commons and Lords. Lloyd George as Prime Minister led the Liberals. Churchill may have been the next most senior Liberal, but he was not his party’s vital man. But Lloyd George had a habit of calling onWSC to address ticklish business (see John Maurer’s following paper).

Churchill himself described his role at this time as part of the “second rank.” Yet his cousin Shane Leslie insisted “that without Churchill there could have been no Anglo-Irish Treaty.” This puzzle can be explained by noting as Coogan does that much of Churchill’s work on the treaty “took place away from the conference table, in private meetings with Collins at the home of Sir John Lavery, the painter.” As to Churchill’s full contribution to the negotiations, Coogan concludes “there is, of necessity an element of speculation.”

Going through Churchill’s papers during these weeks, one finds much about the Middle East and little about Ireland. Apart from his work on the defence provisions of the treaty, Churchill’s primary contribution lay in impressing upon the Irish “the sincerity and goodwill of the Imperial Government,” a task that from the outset he considered of “the utmost importance.”

Bobbing and Weaving

After seven plenary sessions Collins and Griffith suggested to Lloyd George that they switch to meeting only in two-a-side sub-committees. This effectively marginalized the baggage with which de Valera had saddled his lead negotiators. The Prime Minister not only concurred with this move; he even conspired in pretending to
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publicly that it was his idea, so as to shield Collins and Griffith from the suspicions of de Valera.

From this point progress began to be made. Lloyd George and Chamberlain developed a good rapport with Griffith, while Birkenhead and Churchill established equally good relations with Collins. These personal dynamics drove the negotiations to their conclusion.

At the second plenary session, Churchill had been appointed chairman of the Joint Sub-Committee on Naval and Air Defence. This suited him, for Great Britain’s security was his primary concern. The defence discussions would not make or break the Treaty, but both parties considered them important. For the Irish the issue was sovereignty; for the British, survival.

Churchill did not get off to a good start. He was dismayed to learn from Lord Beatty that the Admiralty did not attach as much importance to the Irish ports as did he and the Prime Minister. Even more surprisingly, Churchill displayed an ignorance of Irish geography when he gave the impression that he thought Lough Swilly on the coast of County Donegal was under Northern Ireland’s control.

As always, Churchill persevered. The British held that Ireland could rely on the Royal Navy for maritime defence and the Irish contribution would be to allow Britain’s military to use certain ports and airfields in southern Ireland. The Irish delegates in turn submitted “a Sinn Fein memorandum insisting that control of naval defence should rest with Dublin,” but Churchill said: “This able memorandum will shorten the task of this committee, in fact it will bring it to an end.” It was clear that no agreement could be reached on defence without first settling the issue of sovereignty.

Griffith and Collins were trapped between de Valera’s intransigent insistence upon a republic and the British government’s equally adamant insistence upon Dominion status. Recognizing that world opinion and even Irish opinion would see the British offer as entirely reasonable, the Sinn Fein representatives tried to control events so that any break in the discussions leading to a resumption of hostilities would come over partition—an issue that would at least enjoy the support of the southern Irish population. This dilemma exposes the principal flaws that each side brought to the discussions.

Ironically, for both the British and the Irish, the flaw in their positions had to do with popular sovereignty. The British repeatedly insisted that the Irish must freely choose Dominion status. But no choice can be free when the alternative is coercion. The strength of Sinn Fein on the other hand rested on its showing at the 1918 General Election. The Dáil was a legitimate democratic body, but the same election had also produced in north-eastern Ireland continued support for remaining within the United Kingdom. Sinn Fein could not argue that it was the only lawful government of all of Ireland without placing itself in the same position as the British government with respect to southern Ireland. Each side was demanding something unrealistic, and contradictory to the very arguments it made to support its demands.

Perhaps only the Welsh Wizard Lloyd George could have conjured a solution out of this morass. He began by steering the Irish gently away from being able to break on the issue of partition by raising the specter of the Tory diehards. Bonar Law had stirred from his semi-retirement to inform Lloyd George that he would never permit forcing Ulster into a unified Ireland. The vision of a Bonar Law government taking over, and waging all-out war against southern Ireland, was a powerful catalyst. Collins knew his military strength almost to the last bullet: for the Irish, total war would be hopeless.

**The Crux of the Matter**

Perhaps the crucial meeting was in Churchill’s own house at 2 Sussex Square on 30 October. While Churchill and Birkenhead spoke with Collins, Lloyd George met alone with Griffith, explaining that if the Irish “would give ‘personal assurances’ on the Crown, free partnership with the British Empire and coastal and naval facilities, he would ‘smite the diehards’ and, more importantly, would ‘fight on the Ulster matter to secure essential unity.’” Perhaps the crucial meeting was in Churchill’s own house at 2 Sussex Square on 30 October. While Churchill and Birkenhead spoke with Collins, Lloyd George met alone with Griffith, explaining that if the Irish “would give ‘personal assurances’ on the Crown, free partnership with the British Empire and coastal and naval facilities, he would ‘smite the diehards’ and, more importantly, would ‘fight on the Ulster matter to secure essential unity.’” What all was said and agreed we will never know, but Lloyd George duly smote the diehards, with the assistance of Chamberlain and Birkenhead. The Irish delegation, however, got crossed up in the drafting of the letter providing the necessary assurances. The intended version, reading “free partnership with the British Commonwealth,” was transformed into “free partnership within the British Commonwealth.” This implied acceptance of the Crown and effectively doomed any republican settlement.

As for fighting “on the Ulster matter to secure essential unity,” Lloyd George held out the tantalizing promise of a Boundary Commission to adjust the border between North and South. This would appear to favour the South, given the preponderance of Catholics in the counties of Fermanagh and Tyrone and in the city of Derry. But the bait had a hook. Lloyd George used it to induce further assurances from Griffith alone not to repudiate him as he put pressure on Ulster to accept the Boundary Commission. Griffith’s private assurance guaranteed that the talks could not break up over partition. The Welsh Wizard had got the Irish goat.

Still it remained that the British had no Irish signatures on a Treaty to establish a Dominion. Collins and Griffith may have agreed on the advantages of Dominion status, but as Professor Ward has written, there was no clear definition of Dominion status in 1921. The Canadian model was constantly referred to by the British, but the Irish replied that Canada was an...
ocean away, while Ireland was only a ferry-ride across St. George’s Channel. In practice, would Ireland really have the same degree of independence as Canada?

Lloyd George got round this objection by telling the Irish to insert into the Treaty “any phrase they liked to ensure that the Crown in Ireland would be no more in practice than it was in Canada or any other Dominion.” With this decision the point had been reached by the end of November where the Irish now had to provide a simple yes or no.

Dry Runs and Closure

On Saturday, 3 December the Irish Cabinet met in Dublin to discuss the draft Treaty. Surprisingly no proper record of this vital meeting was kept, and this led to conflicting versions of events. Essentially, the sticking point de Valera fixed on was the loyalty oath to be sworn by Irish officials. The delegates were instructed to return to London to try to fix this if possible but if unsuccessful to try to make the break over partition.

Back in London, Churchill took the initiative of consulting with Labour’s Harold Laski to formulate an oath acceptable to both Britain and Ireland. Soon after, Laski claimed that it was the oath he drafted that went into the Treaty, but this conflicts with a counter-claim that the oath finally accepted was one drafted by Collins. Either way, there was still one more hitch.

When the delegations met again in London on Sunday the 4th, Griffith tried valiantly to steer the issue back to partition, even though this put him in the unhappy position of trying to reopen a matter he knew to be closed. Gavin Duffy, however, suddenly interjected to say, “…our difficulty is coming into the Empire.” This slip seemingly undid everything. “That ends it!” Austen Chamberlain snapped. The British delegates rose as one and walked out. However, Griffith secretly asked the ever-resourceful Tom Jones to arrange a meeting between Collins and Lloyd George that succeeded in restarting the talks the next day.

Again Griffith started on the well-trod subject of partition. But Lloyd George now accused Griffith of breaking his assurances not to fail him on Ulster. After leaving the room for a few minutes and some dramatic rummaging around in the pockets of various suits, the Prime Minister triumphantly returned with the memorandum Griffith had already twice approved, agreeing to support partition by a Boundary Commission. This staggered the entire Irish delegation. Lloyd George pressed home his advantage: the time had come, he said, for the Irish to decide. Griffith said he would not break his word but thought it unfair to bind his colleagues. He had agreed to sign the Treaty—but one signature alone was not good enough.

The Prime Minister now made his final dramatic gesture: Unless he had the signatures of all the Irish delegates by 10 pm that night, there would be “war—and war within three days.” According to Churchill, “Michael Collins rose looking as if he was going to shoot someone, preferably himself.” The histrionics may have been an act to secure the agreement of Duggan, Duffy and Barton. From private discussions, Lloyd George knew that he had Griffith and Collins on board.

The Irish delegates returned to their London residence to confer. After much anxiety they returned to Downing Street, not by 10 pm but closer to midnight. Here Griffith announced: “Mr. Prime Minister, the Delegation is willing to sign the agreements.”

Repercussions

In later years Churchill adopted a proprietary attitude with respect to the Treaty. This was not simply because he himself had worked out the defence provisions, but because he became the last surviving signatory. Within a year Griffith died under the strain of his labours and Collins was assassinated. Soon after, the Lloyd George government was defeated, lingering resentment over Ireland among Tory diehards being a leading cause. Churchill, Birkenhead and Chamberlain lost office. They returned to office soon enough, but Lloyd George’s brilliant ministerial career was over. By the time Neville Chamberlain was surrendering the southern Irish ports in 1938, his half-brother Austen and Lord Birkenhead had both died.

Small men and opportunists may have seized the initiative, but as the “last man standing” from the fraught last days of 1921, Churchill did not forget the sacrifices made by his colleagues. He had walked with giants, and was at home in their company.

21. Ibid., 671.
22. Years later, Churchill wrote that Collins said: “Of course you must have the ports, they are necessary for your life.” But WSC did not indicate when in the negotiations Collins said this. See Winston S. Churchill, The Gathering Storm (London: Cassell, 1948), 216.
23. This residence was destroyed by bombing in World War II.
25. Ibid., 263.
26. Unbeknown to Barton, Duffy, and Childers, the original draft of this letter was actually produced by Tom Jones before Griffith and Collins ever met with Lloyd George in Churchill’s home, and passed to them by Duggan. This episode shows how much went on behind the scenes. See Coogan, Collins, 254-55.
27. Coogan, De Valera, 264-65. This assurance took the form of a memorandum drafted by Jones, approved by Griffith on 13 November and reaffirmed ten days later. No other delegates, however, were aware of this “second” assurance not to break over partition.
29. Gilbert, Stricken World, 675-76; Coogan, Collins, 273.
30. Ibid., 269.
31. Ibid., 274.
33. Ibid.
Great Britain at the beginning of the 20th century was the leading state in the world, much as the United States is today. But Imperial Germany, in particular, loomed as a threat. Its rulers, restless, insecure and ambitious to impose their hegemony on Europe, provoked British entry into the First World War by launching the German army against Belgium and France. Victory over Germany demanded a horrible sacrifice and did not bring peace. Instead, Britain found itself embroiled in many intractable conflicts around the world, including Ireland; and Churchill would play a major role in the course, conduct, and conclusion of the Irish conflict.

A wide range of interwoven, stubborn problems—domestic, international, and military—confronted British decision makers. It is important to recognize these as aftershocks—the second and third order effects—of a man-made disaster of immense magnitude: the First World War. Ireland’s travail in this era formed part of a larger story of trying to put back together a broken world. Churchill appears throughout the story, helping to direct Britain’s efforts to remain the world’s leading great power.

Consider first the quotidian loss of life: over nine million killed on the battlefields in 1914-18—fatalities, not overall casualties, suffered by the combatant countries. Images of the trenches, with their squalor and brutality, dominate our thinking about World War I. Beyond the battlefield were still greater losses. More non-combatants died as a consequence of the war than on the battlefield itself. There was genocide and ethnic cleansing in Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the Middle East. The downfall of the Czar and the Russian Civil War resulted in more vast losses. Then, beginning in the war’s closing stages, a great influenza pandemic killed fifty million people: perhaps 7,000,000 in India alone, 675,000 in America—more loss of life than the United States suffered on the battlefields of Europe. Mother Nature was magnifying what human beings had done to each other.

Looking at the grueling battles of attrition on the Western Front, we see the grisly nature of the ground war. Long before casualties began to pile up on battlefields like the Somme and Passchendaele, Churchill recognized the lethal effects of modern weaponry. As a soldier he had known war personally. In The World Crisis Churchill would contemplate that “Victory was to be bought so dear as to be almost indistinguishable from defeat.” Nor was this his retrospective conclusion.

Searching for Options

On 29 December 1914, Churchill wrote to Prime Minister H.H. Asquith: “…I think it quite possible that neither side will have the strength to penetrate the other’s lines in the Western theatre.” Then he added, in a memorable and graphic way: “Are there not other alternatives than sending our armies to chew barbed wire in Flanders?”

The search for alternative strategies would lead to the Dardanelles expedition, a very promising strategic
course of action that was squandered, Churchill serving as the chief scapegoat. Scorned as the architect of a failed enterprise, Churchill rejoined the Army, taking command of a battalion in Flanders. His experience only confirmed what he already knew—the dreadful human cost that Britain faced in trying to defeat by direct assault a well-armed, dangerous adversary, fighting from prepared positions on ground of its choosing.

Ever the survivor, despite some near-death episodes, Churchill returned to government, brought back in 1917 as Minister of Munitions by Prime Minister David Lloyd George, who had replaced Asquith the year before. Still Churchill sought a way around the horror of the Western Front: “There are only two ways left now of winning the war, and they both begin with A. One is aeroplanes and the other is America. That is all that is left. Everything else is swept away.”

Just as in World War II, Churchill knew that if Britain needed American aid to garner victory, it must keep the Atlantic sea lanes open. The sinking of the liner Lusitania off the south coast of Ireland strikingly illustrated the dangers that confronted shipping in the Atlantic and British home waters—hence, the importance for Britain of bases to gain and maintain command of the sea. Ireland was of vast strategic significance; if it were in enemy hands, it could cut off this great line of communication. It was therefore critical Ireland afford air and naval bases to Britain.

Churchill is known also for being one of the most important civilian leaders pushing for tanks and armored warfare, a transformation in how armies fight. Two months before the end of the war, Churchill wrote to Lloyd George: “It is universally admitted out here [on the Western Front] that [tanks] have been a definite factor in changing the fortune of the field and in giving us that tactical superiority, without which the best laid schemes of strategists come to naught.” Armor, like aircraft, contributed to breaking open the Western Front—again to get around those battles of attrition.

The German Debacle

One of the great myths coming out of the war was that the German army was unbeaten. Hitler later played upon this misconception, saying it was the German home front that collapsed. That is a myth. The German army retired in good order, but was beaten badly on the Western Front during 1918. The famous General A.C. MacDonnell, commander of the First Canadian Division, told Field Marshal Douglas Haig: “Many of the enemy surrendered without fighting, much to the disgust of the Canadian Highlanders, who as a rule don’t take prisoners! Today they could not help taking prisoners, as the enemy put up no fight.” The German army, its 1918 spring offensive turned back with heavy loss of life, was hammered by constant counterattacks delivered by the American, British, and French armies. Its morale began to crumble, reducing its combat effectiveness and hastening the end of the war.

Also suffering ignominious defeat was the proud High Seas Fleet that Germany had built before 1914: its crews mutinied rather than embark on the suicide mission envisioned by their officers, triggering uprisings in the ports of northern Germany, and eventually it steamed off to captivity in Scotland. Likewise, of course, the regime itself collapsed. Kaiser Wilhelm was overthrown by revolution that spread throughout Germany, and a republic was proclaimed. The morale of the German armed forces, government and people had collapsed under the hideous strain of war. >>

2. Ibid., 44.
The Trumvirate

To construct an enduring peace out of the ruins of war brought together in Paris the three great victors, David Lloyd George, Georges Clemenceau and Woodrow Wilson. Churchill called them “The Trumvirate”—hearkening back to the leaders of ancient Rome. Churchill would later write: “[T]he three men at the head of Great Britain, the United States and France seemed to be masters of the world....Victory absolute and incomparable was in their hands. What would they do with it?” Would they prove as successful in crafting a lasting peace as they had been in providing inspirational leadership to win the war?

As the Trumvirate pondered, Churchill published an insightful article about the foreign policy course Britain should follow. First, he said, keep a firm friendship with the United States. This shows how early Churchill understood the vital importance of the United States to buttressing Britain’s place in the world. Next, Britain and France must work together to maintain Europe’s peace. In particular, Britain must assure France’s security. Third, he wanted reconciliation with Germany, a “soft peace,” to reintegrate Germany with the European family of nations—much as he would after World War II. Churchill comprehended a key element of statecraft: namely that a stable peace required the cooperation of the defeated. Fourth, Churchill saw the Soviet regime that had seized power in Russia as posing a grave danger to British interests in Europe and Asia.

His proposals illustrate Churchill’s astute grasp of the underlying dynamics of world politics and the importance of statecraft for shaping international outcomes. In each of his prescriptions we see a palimpsest, for Churchill would offer the same foreign policy design after the second Great War a quarter century later, and with more success. That Britain, France and the United States fell short in following this guidance in 1918 meant that the “war to end all wars” ended nothing.

In January 1919, Churchill became the Secretary of State for War and Air. Despite his success as Minister of Munitions, where he had successfully demobilized the army, he still had many critics in the press and in politics. The conservative Morning Post wrote: “Character is destiny. There is some tragic flaw in Mr. Churchill which determines him on every occasion in the wrong course...It is an appointment which makes us tremble for the future.” The Conservative leader, Andrew Bonar Law, a partner in the Lloyd George Coalition, cuttingly remarked that he would never agree to Churchill heading the War Office if a “real war” was going on. With friends like these, then we can imagine what Churchill’s enemies must have thought of him. And we think today’s politics are too partisan?

Problems Afield

While the Great War had ended, peace was far from settled. Grisly regional conflicts ensued. The pro-Western Russian republic founded after the overthrow of the Czar was quickly toppled by the Bolsheviks, and a grim tyranny imposed on Russia. Its leaders saw Soviet Russia as at war with the outside world, having as its mission the expansion of Communism. Lenin proclaimed: “As long as capitalism and socialism exist, we cannot live in peace; in the end, one or the other will triumph—a funeral dirge will be sung either over the Soviet Republic or over World Capitalism.”

Churchill had a good read on Lenin and his gang. Lenin, in Churchill’s estimation, was the “Great Repudiator”: God, King, country, morals, treaties, all were fair game for the tyrants in charge of Soviet Russia. Not everyone agreed, but too much blame is put upon Churchill for what happened during the Russian Civil War. Lloyd George, most notably, thought Churchill an extremist over Russia. At one stormy meeting of the government, Lloyd George castigated him, saying British foreign policy needed “to escape the results of the evil policy which Winston had persuaded the Cabinet to adopt.” Clearly, this was a marked
divergence. Churchill was no “yes man” to his chief.

While subduing enemies inside Russia, the Red Army moved westward toward Poland in 1920. Churchill now feared that Communism would spread into the heart of Europe, aided by the war’s heavy casualties and economic dislocation. Central Europe was indeed fertile ground for Communism to take root and spring up. To the press baron Lord Riddell, Churchill “dilated at length on the Bolshevik danger to civilisation... “The Bolsheviks are fanatics. Nothing will turn a fanatic from his purpose. LloydGeorge thinks that he can talk them over and that they will see the error of their ways and the impracticability of their schemes. Nothing of the sort!”

Fortunately for Central and Western Europe, the Poles rallied under their leader, Field Marshal Józef Piłsudski, and won the Battle of Warsaw: “the miracle on the Vistula.” For the time being, Communism did not spread. But there was more to worry about.

Outside Europe, Britain contended with violent disturbances and revolts in an arc of crisis that stretched from India across the Middle East to Africa. In India, there occurred the Amritsar Massacre, which Churchill deplored for its “frightfulness.” British forces were engaged in combat in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine (between Jews and Arabs), Somaliland and South Asia. These places are still front page news today.

Churchill eloquently remarked to Lloyd George that Britain had the privilege of living in Iraq on “an ungrateful volcano.” He sought to measure in a rational way Britain’s interest in the region. Was Iraq a vital British interest? How do you measure “interest”?

Lloyd George answered Churchill by saying he was “against the policy of scuttle.” (Heaven forbid the Americans get into Iraq, with those rich oil fields.) An ardent Liberal, Lloyd George was nevertheless quite an imperialist. And Lloyd George turned to Churchill, now Colonial Secretary, to solve the vexing Middle East conundrum. Off went Winston to the Cairo Conference, and out of his settlement came most of the boundaries of today’s Middle East, marked by great violence down to our own time. Still, it is amazing how lasting (for good or ill) these boundaries are. Churchill left a footprint that endures.

While contending with this arc of crisis in the Middle East, Britain had also to recapitalize its fleet in order to remain the most modern in the world. The large naval programs undertaken by the United States and Japan challenged Britain’s position as the world’s leading sea power. The money spent on the Middle East, Churchill contended, would more than meet the requirements of the Royal Navy to stay abreast of rivals. This problem confronts the American armed forces today: ongoing combat operations which take resources needed to buy the next generation of equipment.

**On Top of It All, Ireland**

The violent unrest in Ireland thus came at a time when British decision makers faced a myriad of worries. In January 1919, when the Irish nationalists declared independence, the British government had to tackle the daunting task of turning swords into ploughshares, bringing the economy and society back to the pursuits of peaceful enterprise, creating in Lloyd George’s memorable phrase “a fit land for heroes to live in.” Lloyd George feared that Britain would suffer great embarrassment from the Irish conflict, so close to home. Nothing less than the government’s credibility appeared at stake. It is worth noting that Lloyd George once again called upon Churchill for help on Ireland, just as he had for some of the most difficult problems he had to face in this period.

One difficulty Churchill faced on Ireland was in obtaining sound advice from the Army’s uniformed leadership. Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, chief of the Imperial General Staff, held politicians in low regard. He recorded in his diary after one meeting of the Cabinet: “The fool [Lloyd George] is frightened...He is not fighting Ireland for in reality he is fighting New York & Cairo & Calcutta & Moscow who are only using Ireland as a tool & lever ag[ains]t England, & nothing but determined shooting on our part is of any use. As usual I found the Cabinet hopeless.” Notice the inclusion of New York on the enemy list. Churchill would later write: “The military authorities contributed unhelpful counsel.” What could Churchill do? He faced serious questions in civil-military relations: how well do civilian decision makers and top military leaders get along; how to develop the capabilities from within a regular army to prosecute effectively a conflict marked by irregular warfare.

Britain resorted to repression in Ireland, a classic case of what we today call a conflict between state and non-state actors. In a famous speech in 1920, Lloyd >>
George declared: “We have murder by the throat.” One person who might have agreed with him was the IRA’s Michael Collins, who feared that unless negotiations got underway, Britain might get the upper hand in this struggle. Half a loaf, after all, was better than none. Not all of Collins’ colleagues agreed with him.

The result of negotiations was the Irish Treaty. Not surprisingly, Henry Wilson lamented: “The agreement is a complete surrender. The British empire is doomed.” By giving in to nationalist extremists in Ireland, unrest would spread to India, the Middle East, and elsewhere—a domino theory of impending decline for the British Empire. Churchill meanwhile observed: “No act of British State policy in which I have been concerned aroused more violently conflicting emotions than the Irish Settlement.”

On the other side, Irish nationalist extremists denounced the Treaty as a sellout. The settlement, rather than bring peace, triggered a round of intense violence that pitted the pro- and anti-Treaty sides of the nationalist movement against each other. More Irishmen were killed in “green on green” violence than during the entire so-called Anglo-Irish War of 1916-22.

Exeunt Omnes

In the middle of it all, caught between and fighting against the extremes, stood Churchill and Collins. What a remarkable team they proved to be—a duo formed of conflict, enemies finding common cause, calculated interest standing against passion and hatred. The team, however, was not destined to last.

Among the casualties of the violence surrounding the Treaty was Collins himself, who died expressing his gratitude for Churchill, without whom, he said, nothing would have been accomplished.

In the midst of these events came the 1922 general election, forced when the Conservatives pulled out of the Lloyd George Coalition. The Liberals were devastated; even Churchill lost his seat in Dundee, and would find himself in the political wilderness for more than two years. When Churchill returned to Parliament, he would serve in a Conservative government headed by Stanley Baldwin, one of the principal ringleaders in the revolt against Lloyd George.

Reflections

Although Winston Churchill was at this time only in his late forties, very young for a minister with his credentials, he had played a critical leadership role during an era of upheaval and transformation. Churchill exhibited all the attributes of great leadership—imagination, energy, vision, assessment, and communication—that he would show during the trials of the Second World War. While demobilizing the Army and coping with the war in Russia, he ranged outside his own narrow departmental responsibility, adopting a larger perspective, that of the statesman.

Adding his role in the Middle East and the Irish settlements, we have a remarkable achievement for a statesman not yet fifty. The legacy of Churchill from this period, the aftermath of the First World War, has lasted down to the present day in the boundaries we see in the Middle East and Ireland. It is a remarkable legacy, a testament not only to Churchill’s greatness as a leader, but to the relevance his experience offers in understanding the problems besetting us in the 21st century.
THE CHURCHILL QUIZ

JAMES R. LANCASTER

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

Level 4:
1. Where did Churchill propose to Clementine on 11 August 1908? (P)
2. American advertisement: “—tastes good, like a cigarette should.” What tastes good? (M)
3. Churchill wrote his mother on 10 November 1895: “…the first class men of___ are in the counting houses and the less brilliant ones in the government.” To which country did he refer? (M)
4. In which speech did WSC say: “I take up my task with buoyancy and hope. I feel sure that our cause will not be suffered to fail among men”? (S)

Level 2:
13. To whom did Churchill refer when he once told the South African High Commissioner, towards the end of the Second World War, “___ and I are like two old love-birds moulting together on a perch, but still able to peck”? (C)
14. 20 August 1940: “Let it roll on full flood, inexorable, irresistible, benignant, to broader lands and better days.” What is “it”? (S)
15. Who told Churchill in January 1941 that he planned to quote the following words to Roosevelt when he returned to America: “Whither thou goest, I will go; and whero thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God,” adding “even unto the end”? (S)
16. Of which Churchill book did WSC write his mother on 28 October 1889: “Milbanke is writing this for me and he is somewhere inside the Empire of the world at my feet, you should never share the heart and hand that once belonged to John, Duke of Marlborough”? (L)

Level 3:
7. Which of WSC’s broadcasts ended with “Good night then: sleep to gather strength for the morning. For the morning will come…Thus will shine the dawn. Vive la France”? (S)
8. Who said: “If I were young and handsome as I was, instead of old and faded as I am, and you could lay the empire of the world at my feet, you should never share the heart and hand that once belonged to John, Duke of Marlborough”? (L)
9. To whom did WSC write of war in September 1909: “what vile & wicked folly & barbarism it all is”? (W)
10. Who said of himself in the House on 16 August 1945: “His place in history is secure”? (C)
11. In which speech did Churchill say: “But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age…”? (W)
12. How old was WSC when he dictated a letter for the first time? (P)

Level 1:
19. “You might as well eat a porcupine one quill at a time!” —19 April 1943. WSC was commenting on the plans to recapture which country? (W)
20. What prompted Winston to write to his mother from Winnipeg in January 1901: “Edward VIIrh—gadzooks what a long way that seems to take one back!”? (C)
21. Which eminent Frenchman, elected to the Académie Française in 1966, once said: “I love English. I learned it from the speeches of Winston Churchill.” (L)
22. When did WSC first say he intended to be Prime Minister? (P)
23. Why did Winston use the name “Junius Junior” when writing letters to The Harrovian? (L)
24. Who was Churchill’s London

Answers

Frank (18) November 1941
Ian Hamilton’s March (17) Sir John

I am going to the book of Ruth 1:16. (16) January 1941


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The Harrovian. (17) Sir John

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