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Back cover: Alan Turing developed the “bombe” device that found German “Enigma” settings and developed “Colossus,” a vital step in the evolution of the modern computer.

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Winston 1940-2010

Thanks so much for the FH 147 cover stories on Winston. Your remembrance was moving, with such lovely memories, and Martin Gilbert was exactly right. Winston had such admiration for all the work done by you and Barbara and everybody else involved with the Churchill Society. He always looked forward to receiving FH.

MINNIE CHURCHILL, LIME REGIS, DORSET

Thank you for the magnificent tributes and your personal words, which struck exactly the right chord. How proud he was in upholding the memory of his grandfather, and standing up for causes he believed in. The back cover epitomises the best of my father in action as a staunch supporter of our armed services, when we had a government that was so spineless as to deny them the proper resources to fight two major conflicts. You also described his drive and energy that got results in so many ways little and large—no bureaucratic hurdle was too big to overcome. Sir Martin’s tribute and all the others were most generous and naturally with some family tales, “one must never let the truth get in the way of a good story”! Thanks for all you and Barbara have done to uphold the memory and legacy of my great grandfather. I continue to be staggered by the range and breadth of the questions you field so ably.

RANDOLPH CHURCHILL, CROCKHAM HILL, KENT

Your tribute was heartfelt and formed the centerpiece to FH’s dignified appreciations. We met in Palm Beach in 2004 while I was writing a short feature story on his fund-raising for the Churchill Museum. We chatted for close to three hours and shared several subsequent lunches. I told him of my partnership with William Manchester on volume three of The Last Lion, and he generously supplied several addresses and phone numbers of Sir Winston’s old colleagues. He didn’t have to do that. That simple gesture spoke to his character.

He told me one of his earliest memories was of the great Christmas fir raised at Chequers, perhaps 1943. The household staff, wary of the tree catching fire, purloined the Prime Minister’s bath sponges, keeping them ready in nearby buckets of water. Churchill, upon discovering his sponges missing, roamed the great house demanding their return. The staff returned them, only to grab them again when the PM’s attention was distracted, and the whole scene was repeated. I put that tale in the book.

PAUL REID, COLUMBUS, N.C.

On 8 May 1995, the 50th anniversary of VE-Day, we went to Buckingham Palace to see recreated the balcony scene fifty years earlier. Later, walking down Buckingham Palace Road, a man came out of the crowd and said to my friend Stan, “I see from your medals that you’re Canadian. My name is Winston Churchill and these are my sons, Randolph and Jack.” We chatted, eerily, for a moment.

That night in Hyde Park, The Queen lit a torch and Dame Vera Lynn sang “We’ll Meet Again,” bringing tears to the eyes of 200,000 watching and singing along. We sat next to East Londoners, hardly people who voted Tory, yet to them, Churchill was different. It was he who had visited their bombed out homes and shops with tears streaming down his face.

A hush settled when Robert Hardy delivered Churchill’s VE-Day speech: “In all our long history we have never seen a greater day than this.” In the silence that followed, one of the East End ladies beside me stood and shouted, “And we stood alone!”

A day or so later we went to the gravesite at Bladon. There was a bouquet from a Dutch couple with a note: “Thank you Mr. Churchill for saving our country.”

RAFE MUIR, LIONS BAY, B.C.

WSC OVER THE WATER

Have you ever considered what might have happened in 1940 had Churchill been President and Roosevelt
Prime Minister? Had the situations been reversed, and Churchill had “got there on his own,” I think FDR would’ve lost Britain. Churchill would have been over in the U.S. pounding the podium, but with the lack of a parliamentary system, he’d have been stuck out of it. I suppose we should be happy things were the way they were.

DEAN KARAYANIS, VIA EMAIL

• Them’s fightin’ words to some of our readers, I suspect! But it’s an interesting speculation. —Ed.

THANKS...

I treasure my copies from 1991. I’ve always said it’s the best association magazine I have ever read—more a journal that a magazine, a literary and historical work, a source of nostalgia.

CYRIL MAZANSKY, NEWTON CENTER, MASS.

THE “DRUNKEN OFFER”

Nicely done on Churchill’s reunification offer to de Valera (FH 147: 57). David Freeman’s exegesis of the works of Terry de Valera and Diarmuid Ferriter blows their allegations out of the water. I do find the PM’s inner circle defensive about his alcohol consumption, and there were others who commented on his being worse for the wear on occasion. It’s plausible that he was so exhilarated by the significance of the Japanese attack that he celebrated with an extra brandy or two. So what? (Nor would an extra brandy have made much difference.) His curious sense that Ireland was really “part of the family” was consistent, and his offer to de Valera was in character.

WARREN E. KIMBALL, JOHN ISLAND, N.C.

TOYEING AROUND

On page 56, Richard Toye is quoted as quoting Churchill that the Hindus were “protected by their own pullulation.” I did not know that one. Do you know where it comes from?

ANTOINE CAPET, UNIVERSITY OF ROUEN

• The more we read of Toye’s opus the more we think we let it off lightly. The quotation is from the Colville Diaries in Martin Gilbert’s Winston S. Churchill VI: 1232, where Colville writes of a conversation on 22 February 1945:

“The PM was rather depressed, thinking of the possibilities of Russia one day turning against us.…He had been struck by the action of the Government of India in not removing a ‘Quit India’ sign which had been placed in a prominent place in Delhi….He seemed half to admire and half to resent this attitude. The PM said the Hindus were a foul race ‘protected by their mere pullulation from the doom that is their due’ and he wished Bert Harris [RAF Bomber Command] could send some of his surplus bombers to destroy them.”

Taken in context with Churchill’s sour mood that night, the statement is unextraordinary, and we can believe it was said (privately of course) with a smirk, since everyone knows Churchill never wished to wipe out the Hindus. Toye breathlessly quotes it as a kind of shocking revelation that WSC hated Indians—which is nonsense. —Ed.

FROM OUR PATRON

I have been greatly touched by Finest Hour 148 dedicating its cover to me to mark my 88th birthday. Thank you so much.

THE LADY SOAMES LG DBE, LONDON

AMBIGIDEXTROUS?

In FH 148: 34, Churchill is holding what appears to be a paint brush in his left hand. Since he was right-handed, was he ambidextrous, or was the picture printed the wrong way round?

RODNEY CROFT, ENGLAND

• The picture is not “flopped,” and we asked David Coombs about this when we saw it. We concluded that either Churchill occasionally touched something up left-handed, or that the thing in his left hand was a steadyng rod used as a support for his right hand when painting fine detail, which is sometimes seen in other photos of him at the easel. —Ed.

CHURCHILL AND HITLER

Manfred Weidhorn’s remarkable analysis (FH 148: 26–30) showing the numerous similarities of Hitler and Churchill—from being artists to not knowing how to surrender—linked together these shared traits in a way I have not seen before. There is one other similarity: Hitler like Churchill gained high office by democratic process. It wasn’t until Hindenburg retired that Nazism took full effect.

RICHARD G. GESCHKE, BRISTOL, CONN.

• Professor Weidhorn replies: Good point, though to be precise, the Nazis never obtained a majority vote under the Weimar Republic (the maximum was 43.9% in the March 1933 election), while the Conservatives did. Hitler was head of the party and so automatically projected into power, while Churchill was on the margins and was only belatedly and grudgingly given power. There probably are other similarities I overlooked. I just tried to hit the big ones, as an exercise in life’s ironies. Thank you for your observation and for the kind words.

THE SUMMER OF ’41

After Hitler invaded Russia, Clementine Churchill sponsored the British Red Cross Aid to Russia Fund. Aged 13, I assisted by running a local lending library, carrying a bag of books around on my bicycle and lending them to neighbours at one penny per week. Over a few months I lent 504 books and was able to contribute two guineas to the fund.

Little did I know that ten years later I would be taking the Prime Minister’s wife out to dinner at a local hostelry in my capacity as chairman of the Woodford constituency Young Conservatives. I still have Mrs. Churchill’s letters of thanks.

JOHN R. REDFERN, EPPING AND WOODFORD BRANCH, CHURCHILL CENTRE UK
The Value of Intelligence, Then and Now

Considering articles for this issue, I searched—as always—for a common thread around which to build the contents. On the surface, publication-ready articles seemed interesting but eclectic: one on Young Winston and Mark Twain (ergo, our cover); a colorful exposition of WSC’s travelogue My African Journey; the Churchill Centre-NEH 2010 Teacher Institute in England; the last of our San Francisco conference papers; book review on the alleged Churchill-Mussolini letters. But nothing, it seemed, jelled together.

We had a lengthy article by Sir Martin Gilbert, spawned after one of our conversations on “Leading Myths,” detailing Churchill’s global involvement with World War II Intelligence; and what Christopher Sterling called a “technology footnote,” on security methods for wartime phone conversations. Far more important than his modest title suggested, this was in fact the beginning of the modern digital age.

Intelligence, perhaps? The theme still needed bolstering. Churchill was deeply involved with intelligence long before World War II.

I thought of David Stafford, the great intelligence scholar, author of the best books on the subject, and an old friend. I asked if I might republish his remarks at our 1996 Conference on Churchill and intelligence from World War I to Pearl Harbor to 1953 Iran (yes, Iran; fancy that)—subjects which dovetailed quite nicely with Sir Martin’s commentary. And lo, we were on our way.

By good fortune arrived a human interest story by Myra Collyer, an 86-year-old ex-WAAF who had helped decipher aerial reconnaissance photos with none other than Sarah Churchill. It was ideal to “pace” the issue, between the technical articles. Almost there! But I wanted an article to stitch it together in modern context.

What might we learn today by comparing the near-reverence with which Churchill treated intelligence information—his “Golden Eggs,” he often called it—compared to our modern, lackadaisical approach to it? Why, for example, aren’t more of today’s leaders calling for “WikiLeaks” to be prosecuted for posting secret documents on the Iraqi and Afghan wars for the whole world, including the enemy, to peruse? What would Churchill think about that?

I asked David Freeman, who has the critical faculty and historical perspective to consider that question. He duly produced a reminder that Churchill had actually faced something similar. Suddenly we had another “themed” issue of Finest Hour.

And then there was the back cover. Imagine my satisfaction in realizing, as the layout process started, that Danny Rogers, the gifted artist who portrays “Young Churchill” on our cover, had also painted Alan Turing, proclaimed a hero by WSC: the Bletchley encryption expert who had designed the “bombe” machine which broke the German Enigma. Rounding off the theme with Turing on the back cover was as if the ghost of Sir Winston were guiding us with an invisible hand.

Only in Finest Hour, I suppose, could we expect to read so much on one aspect of Churchill, and the work of such contributors—writers who for forty years have helped us explore what Sir Martin calls “The Vineyard,” and Lady Soames “The Saga.” This issue is truly the work of the best people in their spheres—which it is my privilege to refract.

Where else could we find such expert and good scholars as Gilbert, Stafford, Sterling and Freeman, to inform us about Churchill and intelligence? To whom does Christopher Schwarz turn to publish his account of Churchill and Twain? Ronald Cohen, the great bibliographer; Arthur Herman, Pulitzer Prize nominee; Suzanne Sigmam, our education leader and exemplar; columnists McMenamin and Lancaster; artist Daniel Rogers; Patrizio Giangreco, ever ready to help us dismember silly books by Italians; senior editors Muller and Courtenay, without whose polish FH would be a lesser product; Sir Winston himself, the craftsman whose words resound regularly in our pages—all are represented.

It is overpoweringly satisfying to know that Finest Hour has established that no one or two people are indispensable to its role as the Journal of Winston Churchill: the magazine that keeps the tablets. I look at FH and say to myself that it is kept alive by people who dare to believe that Churchill’s inspiration isn’t dead, can’t be permitted to die—who make sure that they, their children and grandchildren have, to plead Churchill’s cause and irradiate his wisdom, this little beacon of faith. }

Richard McEnroe
PROVIDE FOR YOUR BOOKS

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 1ST—
“What shall I do with my books?” Churchill asks in Thoughts and Adventures. It is a question we should all ponder, while there is still time.

In an article last November, Neal B. Freeman writes touchingly of the comprehensive library of the late William F. Buckley, Jr.: an eclectic assortment of books, from tomes on the harpsichord to biographies of Elvis Presley, from books inscribed to him to feverishly marked-up tomes relating to his own writing, to the classics he admired. Because he had not thought to leave specific instructions for its disposition, his library was broken up, scattered to the winds. Not everything reached an appreciative owner.

More practically, Freeman serves to remind anyone who has what Lord Morley considered “a few books” (fewer than 5000) to plan for their disposition. He certainly inspired me. Over the winter I will draft specific directions for the disposal of my own library, subject by subject from the Malakand Field Force to my complete run of Classics Illustrated comics. I will try to find the best possible homes.

For time, the churl, is running, and we must all recognize it. Neal Freeman conveys an ineffable sadness, for so many of us who loved and admired Bill, at the scattering of his library—remindful of what Churchill wrote about Arthur Balfour:

“I saw with grief the approaching departure, and—for all human purposes—extinction, of a being high uplifted above the common run. As I observed him regarding with calm, firm and cheerful gaze the approach of Death, I felt how foolish the Stoics were to make such a fuss about an event so natural and so indispensable to mankind. But I felt also the tragedy which robs the world of all the wisdom and treasure gathered in a great man’s life and experience and hands the lamp to some impetuous and untutored stripling, or lets it fall shivered into fragments upon your ground.” —RML

Quotation of the Season

“...the disposition to hunt down rich men as if they were noxious beasts...is a very attractive sport. [But] to hunt wealth is not to capture commonwealth. This money-gathering, credit-producing animal can not only walk—he can run. And when frightened he can fly. If his wings are clipped, he can dive or crawl. When in the end he is hunted down...confidence is shaken and enterprise chilled, and the unemployed queue up at the soup-kitchens or march out upon the public works with ever-growing expense to the taxpayer and nothing more appetizing to take home to their families than the leg or the wing of what was once a millionaire.”


PECK ON WEBSITE

Webmaster John Olsen has posted a memorable performance by Gregory Peck following the formation of The Churchill Centre in 1995, which was recently digitalized by Gary Garrison. Although we produced this video fifteen years ago, it represents what we set out to do. The filmography was underwhelming, but you can’t beat the voiceover:

Part 1: http://xrl.us/bh5vgc
Part 2: http://xrl.us/bh5vfy

THE POPE ON THE FEW

LONDON, SEPTEMBER 17TH—Speaking at Westminster Hall, Pope Benedict XVI praised Britain’s historical achievements and addressed the current lapse into relativism. Reason and religion needed each other, he argued, if they were not to become ideology and fundamentalism respectively.

Two days later on Battle of Britain Sunday, he praised the young men of the RAF who courageously laid down their lives in 1940 resisting, he said, the “evil ideology” that had oppressed him among millions of others. The British have not been used lately to being praised by outsiders; indeed, they have largely forgotten all but the shameful episodes in their own history. So the Pope’s words had an impact.

Will relativism fall out of favor? Will the rights of conscience be successfully asserted against an implacable egalitarianism? No one will know these things for a long time....Not long after Princess Diana’s showbiz funeral had given the impression that Britain was sinking into a bath of sentimentality, the Queen Mother’s funeral, with its solemnity and religious language, rallied the British to an appreciation of their older and more substantial identity. Pope Benedict sought the same result in religious terms. >>
Whether or not he ultimately succeeds, he has established that there is a large audience for truth and reason—perhaps a larger one than for their cheaply appealing opposites.

—John O’Sullivan in National Review

**¡VIVA CHILE!**

Sebastian Piñera began a state visit to Britain with a tour of the Churchill War Rooms. Sr. Piñera refrained from repeating the words “blood, toil, tears and sweat” from his boyhood hero’s 1940 speech, which he had kept at his side during the miners’ ordeal. But he sat in Churchill’s wooden chair and pulled from a suit pocket a sack containing a lump of rock taken from the San José mine, from which thirty-three miners were freed after sixty-nine days below ground. He also offered as a gift to the War Rooms’ director Phil Reed a facsimile of the first, red-lettered note saying “Estamos bien en el refugio, los trente-tres” (“We are doing well in our refuge, the thirty-three.”) In return, Mr. Reed gave the President a book of Churchill’s quotations.

Overseen by Piñera in a 22-hour operation, at the end of which he hugged each miner as he emerged from the emergency chute bored 622 metres behind, which is a good principle for Chile and for the world.

—Martin Hickman in The Independent

**SOMERVELL AWARD 2010**

Chicago, October 15th—Neville Bullock’s “Eye-Witness to Potsdam” (Finest Hour 145) was selected by the FH editorial board for the 2010 Somervell Award, for the best article appearing over the past year (numbers #144-47).

There were many strong contenders among those four issues, including Martin Gilbert’s “A Plan of War against the Bolsheviks” and Warren Kimball’s “The Real ‘Dr. Win-the-War.’” But Bullock’s recollection of his time at Potsdam impressed our board with its insight.

“It is always good to hear a worm’s-eye view from an intelligent and observant worm,” wrote senior editor Paul Courtenay. David Freeman added: “I found it to contain a good deal of strong, impressionable material that could be incorporated into my lectures.” Said Terry Reardon: “I liked the articles on Ed Murrow and Harry Hopkins. But I give my vote to this firsthand account: informative and highly entertaining.”

The Somervell Award, formerly the Finest Hour Journal Award, was renamed at the suggestion of David Dilks for the Harrow master who taught young Churchill English. Previous winners were: Paul Alkon for the Lawrence of Arabia features, FH 119; Larry Arnn for “Never Despair,” FH 122; Robert Pilpel for “What Churchill Owed the Great Republic,” FH 125; Terry Reardon for “Winston Churchill and Mackenzie King,” FH 130; David Dilks for “The Queen and Mr. Churchill,” FH 135; Philip and Susan Larson for “Hallmark’s Churchill Connection,” FH 137; and David Jablonsky for “The Churchill Experience and the Bush Doctrine,” FH 141.

**STALIN CORRESPONDENCE**

Moscow, April 15th—Russian historian Vladimir Pechatnov has received major funding from the Russian government to support a new annotated edition of Stalin’s correspondence with Roosevelt and Churchill, using archival memos and papers that indicate what Stalin and company were really thinking. He claims full access to dig out the kind of material that Oleg Rzheshovsky produced in an initial way in his War and Diplomacy. Pechatnov is also working to arrange an English translation. One of FH’s contributors had a long talk with Petchatnov in Moscow about this project. It will be helpful to have a new collection to replace various editions of the correspondence compiled without access and/or references to Russian archival material.

**THE YOUTH VOTE**

We were asked recently what we’ve been doing to promote interest in WSC among young people. A troll through the past two years of Finest Hour and the Chartwell Bulletin provides a list of events and people responsible, though there are more:

First Teacher Institute with NEH grant support, Ashland University, Muller/Lyons/Sigman, 2007.

Churchill in Advance Placement

**A R O U N D  &  A B O U T**

_The Wall Street Journal_ observed on September 17th that proposals for the U.S. government to punish China for its overvalued yuan with protective tariffs are bad policy: “...pegging the yuan to the dollar is not ‘currency manipulation’ or ‘stealing American jobs’. ...China’s real sin is sterilization, which insulates its domestic economy from the money-creating effect of a currency board.”

Quoting Milton Friedman’s _A Monetary History of the United States_, the _Journal_ says that in 1921-29, “when the world used gold instead of dollars for monetary reserves, the [U.S.] gold stock grew by about 50%, reflecting its trade surplus. [But] from 1923 on, a policy of sterilization caused the level of high-powered money to remain stable, and wholesale prices fell 8% from 1925-29. This short-circuited the self-correcting mechanism inherent in the gold standard, which is akin to a universal currency board when all currencies are pegged to gold. The U.S. should have seen an increase in the money supply, causing higher prices and over the long term tending to restore trade balances.

“Instead the Federal Reserve wreaked havoc on countries trying to stay on or rejoin the gold standard, especially Britain, which was hemorrhaging gold. It was forced into a period of deflation and couldn’t compete with the American export juggernaut. London responded with protectionism in the form of Imperial Preference, which contributed to the Great Depression, and the gold standard system collapsed.”

The reader who sent us this cutting added: “It’s too bad no one understands except the _Wall Street Journal_. When Churchill decided to support Imperial Preference in the late 1920s, he was not abandoning Free Trade, but reacting to U.S. monetary policy, desperate to defend Britain against the Fed.”

The editor is very muddy where economic theory is concerned, but this seems to make some sense. Though Churchill said his decisions as Chancellor of the Exchequer only mirrored recommendations of the Bank of England, the Bank at that time was as pro-gold as the late Dr. Friedman. We would welcome an article from a qualified reader who can explain all this to us “on one sheet of paper.” Or, say, 1500 words.

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Ted R. Bromund in _Commentary_ magazine, 27 August: “On Fox News Sunday, a slightly incredulous Chris Wallace asked former Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich if he were serious when he compared himself to Winston Churchill in his ability to come back from political oblivion. Blagojevich replied: “You’re right, I’m not serious. I don’t smoke cigars or drink scotch, and I think I can run faster than him.”

Bromund, who quoted Churchill’s reply to teetotaler Field Marshal Sir Bernard Montgomery (“I drink and smoke and am 200% fit”), went on to recall Churchill’s note to his War Secretary in 1941 (published in _The Grand Alliance_): “Is it really true that a seven-mile cross-country run is enforced upon all in this division, from generals to privates?...A colonel or a general ought not to exhaust himself in trying to compete with young boys running across country seven miles at a time....Who is the general of this division, and does he run the seven miles himself? If so, he may be more useful for football than war. Could Napoleon have run seven miles across country at Austerlitz? Perhaps it was the other fellow he made run. In my experience based on many years’ observation, officers with high athletic qualifications are not usually successful in the higher ranks.” Perhaps, Bromund adds, “Churchill’s maxim also applies to governors.” Well done, Mr. Bromund.”
Vancouver student speakers
Timon Ferguson/Kieran Wilson, CB 23.
Young Winston on Afghanistan,
Then and Now, FH 147.
How Bad a Student Was Young Churchill?, CB 24.
Students’ Choice, Best Recent
Googlworl: New Generations
and the Concept of Joining, FH 148.
Third Teacher Institute,
Sigman/Muller, Summer 2010 (p. 45).

ERRATA, FH 148
Page 4: The letter on “...Prayers
and the Lash was from James Mack
in Ohio, not Don Abrams—sorry.
Page 7: Sidney Allinson reminds
us that the Duke of Hamilton did not
personally arrest Rudolf Hess, who was
held by ploughman David Maclean for
the Home Guard. The Duke inter-
viewed Hess, confirmed his identity
and spoke to Churchill; one source says
he was “summoned to Ditchley.” The
Duke was appalled at the thought that
his loyalty might be questioned.

USS CHURCHILL RESCUE
ADEN, SEPTEMBER
27TH—At least
thirteen African
migrants were
dead after a U.S.
Navy rescue
mission in the
Gulf of Aden
went awry. USS
Winston S.
Churchill was
coming to the aid of eighty-five people
adrift in an overcrowded motor skiff in
the busy shipping lanes between the
coasts of Yemen and Somalia. The boat
was initially discovered by a Korean
vessel, which passed its location to the
Churchill, whose crew members went
to the skiff and tried to repair broken
engines but were unsuccessful.
The crew then began towing it out of the
sea lanes toward the coast of Somalia.
As the crew of the Churchill attempted
to provide them with food and water,
the passengers rushed to one side of the
vessel, which capsized, throwing all of
them into the water. Sailors from the
Churchill rescued sixty-one.

The Gulf of Aden is an important
shipping route between the
Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean.
Somali pirates have lately hijacked
several cargo vessels. In addition, the
United Nations estimates 74,000
Ethiopians and Somalis fled to Yemen
as refugees in 2009. Most cross the
Gulf of Aden in overcrowded vessels
run by smugglers. —NBC News

BUTTERFLIES RETURN
CHARTWELL, KENT, AUGUST 19TH—The butterfly
house where Sir Winston would indulge his passion for breeding rare
insects has been rebuilt. As a youth,
WSC was an avid lepidopterist, collect-
ing and pinning specimens from
then-teeming fields around Harrow. He
returned to the hobby periodically,
with travels through South Africa,
India and Cuba. At Chartwell, new
breeding cages allow visitors to experi-
ence his butterfly garden with its
insect-friendly lavender borders and
buddleia jungles, just as WSC enjoyed
them in the Forties and Fifties.

Matthew Oates, the National
Trust conservation adviser, said
Churchill contacted L. Hugh Newman,
to a towering figure in the butterfly
world, in 1939 after Newman moved
to within five miles of Chartwell.
Newman persuaded an eager Churchill
to reintroduce species such as the
black-veined white and European swal-
lowtail, and to convert the under-used
summer house. Sadly, the attempt was
not a success, Oates said: “He started
off with a plan to breed species which
were native to southern England but
then overreached himself with these
attempts, which ended in rather spec-
tacular failure.”

Since Churchill’s death, half a
dozen butterfly species have dis-
appeared from the Weald of Kent and
populations of survivors have more
than halved in number. The new
breeding attempts, concentrating on
common species, will not restore
depleted populations, ravaged by con-
sumption of habitats for farming and
building. Instead they are intended to
give a more authentic history experi-
ence for visitors to Chartwell.

More serious conservation work
is taking place amid the swathes of grassland in
the grounds, which are being left
unknown through the growing season in an
try to stimulate insect numbers.
This is what the great man would
have wanted, said Mr. Oates. “I would
argue very strongly that Churchill was
a pioneer wildlife gardener, and view
him as a bit of a champion of wildlife
and butterflies.” Nigel Guest of the CC
Chartwell Branch, and a volunteer at
Chartwell, writes: “I can confirm that
the revitalised butterfly house is a ter-
rific innovation and attraction. Last
year was a superb year for butterflies
and negotiating the butterfly walk was
difficult because there were so many of
these beautiful creatures adorning the
plants and the ground.”

Churchill’s Favourites
Peacock: This feature of summer
gardens camouflages itself against
tree trunks and can face
down predators such as
mice by hissing and flashing
the striking “eyes” found on its hindwings.
Small Tortoiseshell: Hundreds of
tortoiseshells added colour
to garden parties at
Chartwell. They have
deprecated in recent years, possibly
affected by a parasitic fly which thrives
in warmer, wetter conditions.

European swallowtail: A rare
migrant from the continent,
it is related to Britain’s
largest, rarest butterfly.
Churchill failed to breed these at Chartwell.
**Painted Lady:** A North African visitor which makes a late summer migration to Britain when its numbers become unsustainable in native habitat.

**Black-veined White:** A large white species recorded in the 17th century; it disappeared in Britain around 1925, probably a victim of disease or predation. Churchill’s efforts to establish it at Chartwell failed.

—Jonathan Brown, *The Independent*


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**GARTER CEREMONY 2010**

**WINDSOR, JUNE 14TH—** In 1348 King Edward III created the Most Noble Order of the Garter; in addition to The Queen and other royal persons, the complement is restricted to twenty-four members, who are termed Knights Companion (KG) and Ladies Companion (LG). Chosen personally by The Queen, they are among the most eminent people in the United Kingdom and other Commonwealth countries of which she is also Queen. Since 1348, 1002 members have been appointed, notably Sir Winston Churchill in 1953; his daughter, Lady Soames, was admitted in 2005.

There is a romantic legend about the Order’s origin: at a court ball, the Countess of Salisbury’s garter slipped to the floor and the King, retrieving it, wrapped it round his own leg: as onlookers sniggered, the King said, “Honi soit qui mal y pense” (Shame on him who thinks evil of it). This became, and remains, the motto of the Order of the Garter. But the more likely explanation is that the Garter is a badge of unity and concord, possibly representing a sword-belt.

Each June, Knights and Ladies of the Order of the Garter accompany The Queen to St. George’s Chapel at Windsor Castle for their annual service. A magnificent procession is formed, led by the Military Knights of Windsor, and the officers of the College of Arms (kings-of-arms, heralds and pursuivants), with the Knights and Ladies of the Order of the Garter following them. The Queen’s Bodyguard of the Honourable Corps of Gentlemen at Arms and The Queen’s Bodyguard of the Yeomen of the Guard are also on duty.

This year Lady Soames invited my wife and me to be present in St. George’s Chapel. We had a splendid front-row view of the panoply of state as it made its way into the chapel and—at the end—out again. Although the spectacle was unforgettable, the purpose of the event could not be overlooked. It was a religious observance, in which the Knights and Ladies of the Order of the Garter held their annual service of thanksgiving. I can do no better than record one of the Anglican prayers:

“Almighty God, in whose sight a thousand years are but as yesterday: We give thee most humble and hearty thanks for that thou didst put into the heart of thy servant, King Edward, to found this order of Christian chivalry, and hast preserved and prospered it through centuries until this day. And we pray that, rejoicing in thy goodness, we may bear our part with those illustrious Companions who have witnessed to thy truth and upheld thine honour; through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, himself the source and pattern of true chivalry; who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. Amen.”

—Paul H. Courtenay

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Lady Soames between Sir John Major (former Prime Minister) and Lord Bingham of Cornhill (former Lord Chief Justice) in an earlier year.

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**Will the Internet kill magazines? Did instant coffee kill coffee?**

New technologies change many things. But not everything. You may surf, search, shop and blog online, but you still read magazines. And you’re far from alone.

Readership has actually increased over the past five years. Even the 18-34 segment continues to grow. And typical young adults now read more issues per month than their parents. Rather than being displaced by “instant media,” it would seem that magazines are the ideal complement.

The explanation, while sometimes drowned out by the Internet drumbeat, is fairly obvious. Magazines do what the Internet doesn’t. Neither obsessed with immediacy nor trapped by the daily news cycle, magazines promote deeper connections. They create relationships. They engage us in ways distinct from digital media.

In fact, the immersive power of magazines even extends to the advertising. Magazines remain the number one medium for driving purchase consideration and intent. And that’s essential in every product category. Including coffee.

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**Right:** Shortly after publishing “Googleworld” last issue, we read this counterattack by the magazine industry. We hope they’re right.
Adventures in Shadowland, 1909-1953

Churchill valued secret intelligence more than any other politician of his century. Without him, the modern intelligence community might never have developed as it did.

DAVID STAFFORD

In early 1995, after a week’s intensive work in the Churchill Archives at Cambridge, researching my book *Churchill and Secret Service*, I opened yet another file of documents. I had reached that dangerous stage, rarely admitted by historians, of secretly hoping it would contain nothing that demanded more tedious note-taking.

It was marked “Private correspondence, 1949.” This was promising for my unworthy hopes. After his triumphs in the Second World War, everyone wrote to Churchill, a great deal of it inconsequential. With luck I might finish this file quickly.

Speeding through a bizarre miscellany of invitations to lectures, garden fetes, school prize-givings, even the blessing of babies, I came upon a telegram from Spain. It was addressed to Churchill at his London home at 28 Hyde Park Gate. There were only four lines. This is what it said:

MESSAGE RECEIVED VERY LATE AS WAS TRAVELLING APOLOGIES STOP NUMBERS INCLUDING MINOR PARTS AND ATTACHMENTS IN BOTH CASES ARE NOW TWO HUNDRED AND THIRTY SIX THEIRS AND ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTEEN OURS

What did it signify? Crates of sherry consumed by Spanish and British Cabinet members? Comparative advantages of rival cigar-rolling devices? My eye was suddenly caught by the name of the sender: Alan Hillgarth.

I instantly knew that I had stumbled on some unknown episode in Churchill’s adventures with the secret intelligence mission conducted by Churchill while out of office: keeping track of Soviet spies in Europe.

Dr. Stafford, of Victoria, B.C., was for many years project director at Edinburgh University’s Centre for the Study of the Two World Wars and Leverhulme Emeritus Professor in the University’s School of History, Classics and Archaeology. A preeminent intelligence scholar, his books include *Camp X: Canada’s School for Secret Agents, 1941-1945* (1986); *The Silent Game: The Real World of Imaginary Spies* (1988); *Spy Wars: Espionage and Canada*, with J.L. Granatstein (1990); *Churchill and Secret Service* (1998, reviewed FH 96); and *Roosevelt and Churchill: Men of Secrets* (2000, reviewed FH 110). His latest book is *Endgame, 1945: The Missing Final Chapter of World War II* (2007, reviewed FH 139). This article is excerpted from his paper, “Churchill and the Secret Wars,” 13th International Churchill Conference, Ashdown Park, East Sussex, England, October 1996.
world. I recognised Hillgarth’s name from my book about the top secret agency Churchill created in 1940 to “set Europe ablaze” with the fires of sabotage and subversion, the Special Operations Executive (SOE).

Hillgarth was just the sort of maverick adventurer to whom Churchill was magnetically drawn. Wounded as a 16-year-old Royal Navy midshipman at the Dardanelles, he had, he hinted, smuggled guns during the 1920s Riff rebellion—when tribal insurgents in Spanish Morocco dealt Spain one of the most severe reverses ever sustained by a European colonising power at the hands of natives. Later Hillgarth went broke sinking a gold mine in Bolivia, and wrote a rollicking cloak and dagger novel of adventure and intrigue which even caught the eye of Graham Greene.

The Spanish Civil War found him as British Vice-Consul in Majorca. By 1940 he was in Madrid for that anxious period when Churchill feared that neutral Spain under General Franco might join forces with Hitler. Nominally the British naval attaché, in reality Hillgarth helped supervise Britain’s secret intelligence, sabotage, and subversion operations in Spain.

Churchill, who had met Hillgarth in Majorca in the 1930s, regarded him with particular trust, interviewing him personally in London and circulating his reports to the War Cabinet. He also employed him on at least one particularly sensitive mission. In September 1941, Hillgarth visited Chequers to discuss ways of keeping Spain out of the war. As a result Churchill stage-managed the unblocking of $10 million secreted in a Swiss Bank account in New York. Shortly afterwards the “Knights of Saint-George,” otherwise known as British gold sovereigns, were riding to war, lining the pockets of Spanish generals willing to argue the neutrality case with General Franco. Hillgarth, like Churchill, had had “a good war.” Ian Fleming, a close friend, called him “a useful petard and a valuable war winner.”

But what was Hillgarth doing sending a telegram to Churchill in 1949?

In fact, the telegram’s mysterious figures referred to the number of intelligence officers, British and Soviet, in Moscow and London respectively. During this period, the Cold War in Europe was becoming glacial. In 1945 Igor Gouzenko, a junior cypher clerk, had walked out of the Soviet mission in Ottawa a month after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, carrying beneath his coat documents that exposed a massive Soviet intelligence offensive against the West. Six months later Churchill had delivered his “Iron Curtain” speech in Fulton, Missouri. In 1948 Prague fell to the Communists and the Russians imposed their blockade of Berlin. Churchill, in opposition since 1945, was anxious to expose Soviet and Communist misdemeanours and called for vigilance against Moscow’s spies and Fifth Columns around the globe.

In 1949 Hillgarth was retired and living in Ireland. But he travelled, and kept valuable contacts with old intelligence and military friends in London. Even while out of office, Churchill relied on private information to keep him informed...right up to October 1951, whenWSC returned to Downing Street.

Throughout his life Churchill relished the hands-on contact with agents normally reserved to case officers. The Second World War—as my book demonstrated—is littered with examples of Churchill listening spellbound to the exploits of heroic young agents returned from behind enemy lines. Hillgarth was part of a long tradition.

Sir Martin Gilbert’s official biography has revealed in detail how in the 1930s, a voice crying in the wilderness against the threat of Hitler, Churchill turned Chartwell into a massive private intelligence centre. His best known informant was Desmond Morton, an officer in the Special Intelligence Service and head of the Industrial Intelligence Centre. Morton became the Prime Minister’s official adviser on intelligence during the Second World War. Yet his name never once appears in the Chartwell visitors book. Indeed it seems extraordinary that while still in opposition, Churchill could calmly invite an SIS officer to Chartwell to chat about intimate secrets of state over lunch.

Only within the last two decades or so has it become possible for scholars to write intelligence history. And as the shadows have lifted, we can see with increasing clarity >>

“Even while out of office, Churchill relied on private sources of information to keep him informed....Sir Martin Gilbert’s official biography has revealed in detail how in the 1930s, a voice crying in the wilderness against the threat of Hitler, Churchill turned Chartwell into a massive private intelligence centre. [We are] littered with examples of Churchill listening spellbound to the exploits of heroic young agents...."
that Churchill enjoyed lifelong contacts with the secret world that go back well before the First World War. It is clear that he valued secret intelligence more than any other British politician of this century. Without Churchill, the modern intelligence community might never have taken the shape it did.

**World War I**

Let us briefly go back to the decade when Europe was approaching the fateful guns of August 1914. Behind the arms race raged bitter intelligence battles. Each Great Power spied on its rivals and protected its secrets. Late as usual, Britain joined this continental game in 1909, when the Committee of Imperial Defence approved the creation of a Secret Service Bureau. By the outbreak of war it consisted of the two branches that still exist today: MI5 for counter-espionage and MI6—otherwise known as the Secret Intelligence Service or SIS—for foreign intelligence. Not surprisingly, both MI5 and MI6 focussed on naval affairs. The former sent spy-catchers to sniff out German spies nosing around naval installations in Britain. The latter sent agents to uncover the Kaiser’s naval plans. Both, being new and untried, had difficulty in gaining the ears of ministers. Churchill was the outstanding exception.

It was natural that as First Lord of the Admiralty from 1911 to 1915 he should be interested, as he hints in *The World Crisis*. What he carefully concealed was the provenance, the intensity, and the significance of his influence on the infant secret service. Richard Burdon Haldane, Secretary of State for War in the pre-war Liberal Government, chaired the 1909 committee that recommended its creation. The Director of Military Intelligence was a fellow Scot, Lieutenant-Colonel John Spencer Ewart, a veteran of Omdurman. In November 1909, just weeks after the Secret Service Bureau began its work, Haldane asked Ewart to go and talk to the young man concerned—the President of the Board of Trade, Winston Churchill.

The meeting took place on 15 November 1909 in Churchill’s private office, the bronze bust of Napoleon that he carried with him from ministry to ministry carefully positioned on the desk between them. It sparked a lifelong love affair between Churchill and the Secret Service. He was deeply alarmed by what he had witnessed in Germany. Intrigued by Ewart’s mission, within weeks Churchill had sent him a sixty-page memorandum packed with Board of Trade data about German commerce.

From then on, Churchill saw the Secret Service as vital to national security. As Home Secretary, he eagerly promoted MI5 demands for greater surveillance powers: its legendary registry of spies and potential subversives—what has been described as “the most important and controversial weapon in the British counter-intelligence armoury.” It was Churchill who first authorised the clandestine interception of private mail by general warrants; and who conceived the legislative sleight of hand by which the drastic third Official Secrets Act was slipped through Parliament in 1911.

In 1994 Stella Rimington, then Director-General of MI5, visited Edinburgh. I was able to engineer a few words with her. “Ah yes, Churchill,” she said briskly when I told her of my book. “He opened all the doors when my predecessor made his first nationwide tour in 1911.”

As Europe slid towards war Churchill kept in constant touch with the man she meant: Sir Vernon Kell, the first director of MI5. By the end of July 1914 he was living round the clock in his office, surrounded by telephones. It was on one of these that, late on August 3rd, Churchill rang and ordered him to take the preemptive action the two had long been planning. The next day, as war officially began, suspected German spies on Vernon Kell’s secret list were arrested in a nationwide sweep by the Special Branch.

Kell is not the only important intelligence player of this period in Churchill’s life. Sir Alfred Ewing, Director of Naval Education, yet another Scot, was a short, thick-set man with keen blue eyes and ill-kempt shaggy eyebrows. His first wife was a great-great grandniece of George Washington. On the day war began, he turned up in Churchill’s office with Admiral Sir Henry Oliver, the Director of Naval Intelligence, also a Scot—a taciturn figure of such silent discretion that he was known throughout the Navy as “Dummy” Oliver. They wanted to intercept German navy radio signals.

Churchill immediately agreed and put Ewing in charge. By November, hidden deep within the Admiralty, a code breaking agency known as Room 40 had begun its work. Three years later its greatest coup came with the decyphering of the Zimmermann telegram that so memorably helped bring the United States into the war.

Room 40 was the progenitor of World War II’s Bletchley Park and of Britain’s present-day Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), that great vacuum cleaner in the sky that works in tandem with the American National Security Agency and other allies to sweep up signals intelligence from around the globe.

Churchill was fascinated by Room 40’s work. He personally wrote out in longhand its founding charter and spent many an hour watching the codebreakers at their work. He captured the thrill in *The World Crisis*:

...in Whitehall only the clock ticks and quiet men enter with quick steps laying slips of pencilled paper before other men equally silent who draw lines and scribble calculations and point with the finger or make brief subdued comments. Telegram succeeds telegram...as they are picked up and decoded...and out of these a picture always flickering and changing rises in the mind and imagination...

Thus the statesman who so valued his secret intercepts in the Second World War that he described them as his
“golden eggs” was the very person who in 1914 had made it all possible.

Britain’s SIGINT agency, along with MI5 and MI6, is the third of Britain’s intelligence services. Like them, its history is firmly imprinted with the Churchill stamp. It shows that when he kept his assignment with destiny in 1940, he was already a veteran of intelligence wars—and I’m passing over, of course, those personal encounters with the “Great Game” he’d experienced as soldier-journalist on the North-West frontier of India, in the Sudan, in Cuba, and in South Africa, all of which had made him an ardent enthusiast of the shadow war.

Intelligence is power: the better, the more effective. Churchill, politician that he was, instinctively knew it. It gave him a weapon of multiple uses. He could deploy it against the enemy, as he did so brilliantly in both World Wars, but it also helped in struggles with friends and allies. One reason he liked “Ultra” was that it put him on an equal footing with his Chiefs of Staff and gave him a weapon to wield against reluctant or recalcitrant Generals. But it was also a powerful tool in dealings with allies as well.

Roosevelt and Pearl Harbor

On Sunday evening, 7 December 1941, Churchill was dining at Chequers with the American ambassador, John G. Winant, and Averell Harriman, Roosevelt’s special envoy to Moscow. Shortly after nine o’clock he switched on his wireless, and barely caught an item announcing a Japanese attack on the Americans. Within minutes he was talking to Franklin Roosevelt on the transatlantic line. The President told him of the assault on Pearl Harbor and his intention to seek a Congressional declaration of war on Japan.

At first stunned by the momentous news, Churchill finally grasped its import. Anticipating Germany’s declaration of war on the United States, he concluded that Hitler’s fate was sealed and the war was won. “I went to bed,” he recalled, “and slept the sleep of the saved and thankful.” >>

"Intelligence is power: the better, the more effective. Churchill, politician that he was, instinctively knew it.... He could deploy it against the enemy, as he did so brilliantly in both World Wars, but it also helped in struggles with friends and allies.”
CHURCHILL AND INTELLIGENCE...

But did he also dream contentedly of a conspiracy come to fruition? Claims quickly surfaced in the United States that Roosevelt had deliberately withheld intelligence of the coming attack in order to silence the isolationists and bring the United States into the war.

More recently, voices have suggested that the real Pearl Harbor intelligence conspirator was not Roosevelt but Churchill. According to this claim, Churchill’s astonished reaction at Chequers was nothing but a carefully constructed charade that masked the secret of advanced intelligence about Pearl Harbor that he deliberately concealed in order to lure Roosevelt into war. This, argued two authors in 1991, one a former wartime codebreaker in the Far East, was the true “betrayal at Pearl Harbor.”

Central to this startling conspiracy theory is the claim that prior to the Japanese strike on Hawaii, British and American codebreakers had broken not only Magic, the Japanese diplomatic cypher, but also the Japanese Navy’s operational cypher, JN-25. The American decrypts had not been sent to the White House, according to the conspiracy theorists, but the British ones did reach Churchill and forewarned him of the attack. In short, this theory not only places Churchill at the heart of an intelligence conspiracy. It simultaneously turns Roosevelt into an ignorant dupe.

But the theory is fatally flawed. The reason is not that Churchill was incapable of manipulating intelligence to maximise the chances of American participation. He had already done so in 1940-41, withholding Ultra intelligence revealing German postponement of its invasion plans to keep up pressure on Roosevelt. There are two more cogent reasons. First, the betrayal theory flies in the face of Churchill’s own patent desire to win American help. Why would he deliberately have connived at the destruction of the U.S. Pacific Fleet? One reason he desired American entry was to protect British Far East interests. It would have made far more sense, had he possessed advanced intelligence, to have passed it on to the White House. He would thus have saved the U.S. fleet and earned Roosevelt’s gratitude in a war that would in any case still have occurred.

In fact—the heart of the matter—Churchill did not have advance intelligence about Pearl Harbor. The authors’ contention about JN-25 is simply wrong. It is true that British Far East codebreakers had broken the cypher before Pearl Harbor, perhaps as early as 1939. But what the conspiracy theorists omit to note is that JN-25 was superseded by an improved system, JN-25B, in December 1940, and then again in 1941 by two more successive changes, JN-25B7 and JN-25B8. These new cyphers for all practical purposes were unreadable and unproductive of intelligence. Moreover, the Japanese maintained an extremely high level of security. “The Day of Infamy” was not just an American intelligence failure. It was also a brilliant Japanese intelligence success.

Of course, the specific claims about JN-25 must be distinguished from the more general point that British and American intelligence had long been predicting a Japanese attack, somewhere. The Magic (diplomatic) intercepts unambiguously revealed by late November that Tokyo had opted for war. But the consensus in London and Washington was that Japan’s most likely target was the Philippines and South-East Asia.

Churchill knew a Japanese attack was coming. Every day personal files of intercepts were sent him from Bletchley Park. They were released to the public only in 1993. They reveal that on 6 December, Churchill read a telegram from the Japanese Foreign Minister in Tokyo to his ambassador in London, instructing him to destroy all except certain key codes and burn codes and secret documents. But neither this nor any other intercept he read in the forty-eight hours before Pearl Harbor contained any hint of the actual target.

Indeed, he was still desperately seeking it up to the last minute. We know this because Malcolm Kennedy, a First World War veteran and Japanese linguist, was one of those on high alert at Bletchley Park. Against all the rules, he kept a diary that still survives. On December 5th he had been on 24-hour duty. The next day, he noted that Churchill “is all over himself at the moment for latest information and indications re Japan’s intentions and rings up at all hours of the day and night, except for the 4 hours in each 24 (2 to 6pm) when he sleeps.” On December 7th, when Kennedy, like Churchill, heard the news of Japan’s attack on the wireless, he recorded his “complete surprise.” If Kennedy, working at Bletchley Park, did not know in advance of Pearl Harbor, how would Churchill?
Players in the Intelligence Drama, 1941-1953

WALTER BEDELL SMITH (1895-1961), known as “Beetle,” Eisenhower’s chief of staff in North Africa, Italy and SHAEF, whom Churchill informed of Ultra along with Eisenhower in July 1942. After the war Bedell Smith became Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, where he pre- ceded the legendary Allen Dulles.

MOHAMMAD MOSSADEQ (1882-1967), Prime Minister of Iran from 1951 to 1953, was overthrown in an Anglo-American coup after he had nationalized the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, which Churchill himself had helped found in 1913 to supply the Royal Navy with oil. Imprisoned for three years, he was held under house arrest until his death.

KERMIT ROOSEVELT, JR. (1916-2000), grandson of Theodore Roosevelt, the CIA political action officer who coordinated the coup against Iran’s Prime Minister Mossaddeq, in August 1953. The coup was controversial even in its day—Mossaddeq was either a bulwark against or a dupe of the Communists—experts disagreed. President Obama apologized for the coup in 2009.

CHRISTOPHER MONTAGUE WOODHOUSE (1917-2001), Fifth Baron Terrington, Conservative MP for Oxford, 1959-66, 1970-74. “Monty” Woodhouse won the DSO and OBE for his service with the Royal Artillery in Greece during World War II. He served at the British Embassy in Athens (1946) and at Teheran (1951-52) before becoming Director General of the Royal Institute of International Affairs. In 1952-53 he was involved in organising British aspects of the coup that toppled Mossaddeq in Iran.

Of course there is no doubting Pearl Harbor’s global significance. So far as Churchill and intelligence is concerned, it highlights yet another extraordinary part of the story. American entry into the war paved the way for the greatest intelligence alliance in history—an integrated and co-ordinated system that saw British, American, Canadian, Australian, and other allied codebreakers working side by side to defeat the Germans, Italians, Japanese, and then, during the Cold War, the Soviet Empire.

Again Churchill was architect and master builder. Pearl Harbor sent him rushing to Washington. Here, in a midnight tête-à-tête with Roosevelt at the White House, he confessed that British codebreakers had been reading State Department ciphers, but that since Pearl Harbor he had ordered the work to stop.

The experience suggested, he told the President, that the two allies should henceforth cooperate closely on guarding their own cipher security. Having gone this far, he briefed Roosevelt about British successes against the German Enigma cipher key. But nothing was put on paper.

What is clear is that over the following twelve months he bulldozed aside the constraints and prohibitions of intelligence professionals on his side of the Atlantic. When General Dwight D. Eisenhower arrived in Britain later that year as commander-in-chief of “Torch,” the Allied landings in North Africa, it was Churchill who personally revealed to him and his chief of staff, Major-General Walter Bedell Smith, the secrets of Ultra. Which brings me to the final episode in this all-too-brief account.

Bedell Smith became a postwar Director of the Central Intelligence Agency; he was the immediate prede- cessor to the legendary Allen Dulles of the 1950s. These were the happy times. The CIA, in thrill to covert operations, toppled regimes and disposed of leaders around the world. Churchill, too, had a romantic attachment to action behind enemy lines. It appealed to his courage, and for one so bellicose in spirit who’d experienced the brutal reality of war, cloak and dagger promised relatively painless results. Neither had he shrunken from assassination when the time and target was right. Reinhard Heydrich, Hitler’s dreaded SS henchman, died at the hands of SOE agents in Prague in May 1942. And the killing, on Christmas Eve 1942, of Admiral François Darlan, Vichy’s man in North Africa, at the hands of a Frenchman trained by SOE, was remarkably convenient. The BBC announced on its Christmas Day bulletin: “A Very Happy Christmas to you all. Last night, in Algiers, Admiral Darlan was assassinated.” That morning Churchill sat in bed looking “like a benevolent old cherub.”

Last Act: Mossaddeq and Iran

In 1953, even as Churchill wrestled with the massive stroke that two years later forced him from office, he joined with the CIA in his last great exploit of the secret war.

Three other principal actors starred in the drama. The first was Dr. Mohammad Mossaddeq, the 70-year-old prime minister of oil-rich Iran. “A wily, theatrical, tragicomic figure,” he was also a passionate nationalist. His principal target was the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, 51 percent owned by the British Government and owner of the then largest oil refinery in the world, at Abadan on the Persian Gulf—a complex as big as Salt Lake City, employing close to 40,000 workers. It was Britain’s single largest >>
"Churchill exploited intelligence in all its guises as no other politician before him—and certainly more effectively than either of his wartime allies, Josef Stalin and Franklin Roosevelt. He left an indelible mark on British intelligence, and the Anglo-American alliance owes more than history acknowledges to his fervent support."

**CHURCHILL AND INTELLIGENCE...**

overseas asset. In 1951 Mossadeq nationalised this hated symbol of British imperialism and expelled its British technicians. The next year he kicked out all British diplomats. By 1953, London and Washington wanted to get rid of him. No one disliked him more than Churchill. As First Lord of the AdmiraltyWSC had played a leading role in negotiating the Anglo-Iranian oil deal in the first place. In private he mocked Mossadeq as "Mussy Duck."

The second actor was the head of the SIS in Iran, the Honourable "Monty" Woodhouse, later Tory MP for Oxford. But he was more than that. In the Second World War he’d been one of those brave young warriors fighting behind enemy lines—in his case Greece, close to his and Churchill’s heart. In 1942 he’d helped blow up the Gorgopotamos Viaduct carrying vital German supplies to North Africa. In 1944 he, too, had received a summons to Chequers, where Churchill had taken a shine to him.

Something else had happened while Woodhouse was in England. Lunching with Anthony Eden, a fellow guest was an attractive war widow named Davina Lytton. She was the daughter of the young woman who fifty years before had stunningly captured Churchill’s heart in India, Pamela Plowden. Romance again flourished, and Davina and Monty were soon married. “Our man in Teheran” had a personal link with Churchill.

The final actor was also well known to Churchill and had a name resonant in the United States. Kermit Roosevelt was a grandson to Theodore and cousin to Franklin. He and Churchill had met at the White House Christmas party in December 1941, and since then he’d risen high in the CIA. Now he was its field commander in Iran.

The SIS and CIA concocted a joint plan to topple Mossadeq in a coup. In July 1953 Kermit Roosevelt secretly entered Iran and, in several clandestine nighttime encounters with the Shah worthy of any thriller, persuaded him to cooperate. In London, Woodhouse had several meetings with Churchill. When a hesitant Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, fell sick, Churchill took over and gave the green light to the plot. In August, Teheran was convulsed in carefully-prepared rent-a-crowd riots and Mossadeq was duly deposed.

A week later a triumphant Kermit Roosevelt arrived at Heathrow Airport en route for Washington. SIS top brass gave him a splendid lunch at the Connaught Hotel before his final appointment of the day: Ten Downing Street. Characteristically defying his medical advisers, Churchill had soldiered on since his stroke in June. Events in Teheran had gripped his imagination. Learning that Roosevelt was in London, he demanded a personal account.

At precisely 4 o’clock, Roosevelt rang the doorbell and was ushered in by a military aide. Downstairs, in a reception room converted into a bedroom, he found the Prime Minister, lying in bed propped up by pillows. Churchill grunted a greeting, and Roosevelt sat down beside him. The two men began with small talk and exchanged reminiscences about the White House Christmas Party. Then Roosevelt launched on his tale, presenting the dramatic highlights in considerable detail. Churchill frequently interrupted with questions and from time to time would doze off for a few moments, only to awake and grill the American on a point of detail. For a full two hours the two men talked.

When Roosevelt had completed his account, Churchill grinned and shifted himself up on his pillows. “Young man,” he said, “if I had been but a few years younger, I would have loved nothing better than to have served under your command in this great venture!”

With this telling vignette I must take my leave of Churchill. A warrior to the end, he’d exploited intelligence in all its guises as no other politician before him—and certainly more effectively than either of his wartime allies, Josef Stalin and Franklin Roosevelt. He left an indelible mark on British intelligence, which served him well both in peace and war during his fifty year political career. The Anglo-American intelligence alliance that endures to this day owes more than history acknowledges to his fervent support.

The quest to understand the protean figure of Winston Churchill grows, not diminishes, with the passage of time. As we peel away the layers of historical varnish, the portrait becomes ever richer and more complex. His adventures in the secret world of intelligence make him an even more intriguing figure than we thought.
Harvie-Watt: Behind Closed Doors

While visiting the secret War Rooms and Churchill Museum in London, we saw the rooms occupied by Winston Churchill’s staff and assistants. The doors were open so that visitors could see where the people worked and slept during the Blitz. But there was one exception: a closed door under a sign reading, “General Harvie-Watt.” Is there a reason for this? I understand that Harvie-Watt was a personal assistant to Churchill, and influential, yet I found no reference to him in the museum. —ADRIAN LOTHERINGTON

A Phil Reed, director of the War Rooms, advises that Harvie-Watt’s room has never been open since the area was refurbished in 2003. Although some rooms were restored to their wartime appearance, space limitations prevented more. The room houses computer service equipment.

George Harvie-Watt (1903-1989) was Conservative MP for Keighley, 1931-35, and for Richmond, Surrey, 1937-59. He was educated at George Watson’s College, Edinburgh, then at the University of Glasgow and the University of Edinburgh. He was commissioned into the Territorial Army Royal Engineers in 1924 and became a barrister at Inner Temple in 1930. In 1941-45 he was WSC’s Parliamentary Private Secretary, so he would certainly be entitled to a room in the bunker.

Harvie-Watt became a Lieutenant Colonel in the Territorial Army in 1938 and was promoted to Brigadier in 1941—hence the “General” title. Many copies of his memoirs, Most of My Life (London: Springwood, 1980) are available on bookfinder.com. There are several mentions of him in Jock Colville’s memoirs, The Churchillians and Fringes of Power, and of course he comes up in Sir Martin Gilbert’s official biography, Winston S. Churchill.

In Volume VI, 828-29, is an amusing account from autumn 1940, when Harvie-Watt was commanding an anti-aircraft unit during a visit by Churchill and General Pile, which helps explain why WSC later made him his PPS—and why Churchill was able to imbibe so many whiskies—he never drank them neat!....

As they arrived, Pile told Harvie-Watt that Churchill was “frozen and in a bad temper” and suggested that the Prime Minister be brought “a strong whisky and soda.” Harvie-Watt sent a despatch rider to find one.

“Meanwhile,” he later recalled, “everything was going from bad to worse. The field was almost waterlogged and the rain poured down. Everything I tried to show the Prime Minister he had seen before.” The searchlight control radar set, which had worked on the previous night, failed to function.

A few days earlier it had been announced that because of ill-health, Chamberlain would resign as Leader of the Conservative Party. The question being much debated was whether or not Churchill should succeed Chamberlain as Leader.

“I said it would be fatal if he did not lead the Conservative Party,” Harvie-Watt recalled, “as the bulk of the party was anxious that he should be the Leader now we were at war.”

Churchill, however, “was still suspicious of [the Conservatives] and of their attitude to him before the war. I said it was only a small section of the party that took that line and that the mass of the party was with him. My strongest argument, however, and I felt this very much, was that it was essential for the PM to have his own party—a strong one with allies attracted from the main groups and especially the Opposition parties. But essentially he must have a majority and I was sure this majority could only come from the Conservative Party.”

Not wishing to miss an opportunity of advice from a member of the Whips Office, Churchill questioned Harvie-Watt about “the strength of Ministers and what influence they wielded.” Harvie-Watt replied: “If you have a strong army of MPs under you, Ministers would be won over or crushed, if necessary.” Churchill, he noted, “seemed to appreciate my arguments and thanked me very much. Then he began to feel the cold again and agitated to get away.”

At this moment the despatch rider arrived with the whisky, and Harvie-Watt poured one for the freezing Prime Minister. Churchill swallowed a half-tumbler, then cried out at the taste of the neat whisky: “You have poisoned me.”

Churchill did not nurse a bottle, as an alcoholic would, and occasionally remarked to those who took whisky neat, “you are not likely to live a long life if you drink it like that.” Perhaps this is more than you wanted to know about George Harvie-Watt. ✪
Churchill became Prime Minister on 10 May 1940. Twelve days later, on 22 May, the codebreakers at Bletchley Park broke the Enigma key most frequently used by the German Air Force. This was the hourly two-way top-secret radio traffic between the combined German Army, Navy and Air Force headquarters at Zossen and the commanders-in-chief on the battlefronts.

Included in the newly broken key were the top-secret messages of German Air Force liaison officers with the German Army. The daily instructions of these liaison officers included targets, supply and, crucially, details of shortages such as aviation fuel.

In the desperate days of late May and early June 1940—when the British Expeditionary Force was being evacuated from Dunkirk—daily decrypts indicated the position and intentions of the German field formations as they turned towards the sea. Even with delays in decrypting individual Enigma messages taking, at that time, up to six days, this was an indispensable benefit in guiding the continuation of the evacuation to the last possible moment.

As the German air Blitz on Britain intensified in August and September 1940, fears of invasion mounted. On 11 September Churchill received details of an Enigma decrypt that suggested that invasion plans were being made.
British Military Intelligence commented on this decrypt:

“Although there are a number of possible reasons for this order, it cannot be overlooked that it may be in connection with the movement of troops and armament for invasion purposes.”

Throughout the autumn and winter of 1940, the search for indications of a German invasion remained the top priority of the Bletchley eavesdroppers. On 10 October 1940, Churchill was shown summaries of decrypts of German Air Force top-secret signals that had revealed, among other German instructions, the appointment in the first week of October of German Air Force officers to the embarkation staffs at Antwerp, Ostend, Dunkirk and Calais, where air reconnaissance—another indispensable arm of Intelligence—revealed the presence of what could well have been invasion barges.

Top-secret instructions had also been decrypted at Bletchley with regard to a German air formation headquarters, which was known to be in charge of German Air Force equipment in Belgium and Northern France, “settling the details of loading of units and equipment into ships.” On 24 September 1940 the German Third Air Fleet received orders, also decrypted at Bletchley, concerning the supply of air/sea rescue vessels by seaplane bases off Norway and along the North Sea and Channel coasts “in connection,” as the message sent to Churchill explained, “with the Seelöwe (Sea Lion) operation,” presumed to be the invasion of Britain.

On 9 October 1940 a further decrypt revealed that on the previous day the headquarters of the Second German Air Fleet “asked for provision of two tankers each filled with approximately 250,000 gallons of aviation fuel to be held in readiness for S+3 day (presumably the third day of invasion operations against UK) at Rotterdam and Antwerp.”

It was not until 12 January 1941 that Churchill received the details of an Enigma decrypt that German Air Force无线 stations on the circuit of the air formation headquarters responsible for German Air Force equipment in Belgium and Northern France—equipment that was known to have been on standby for invasion duties—was “no longer to be manned as from January 10.”

The danger of invasion was over. Other decrypts were now making it clear that the new German focus of military and air preparations was against its ally and partner of the previous sixteen months, the Soviet Union.

**Churchill’s Vigilance**

As Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Churchill was intensely concerned with maintaining the secrecy of all aspects of war policy and planning. In no area was secrecy more important to him than with regard to Enigma.

On 16 October 1940 he wrote to General Ismay, head of his Defence Office: “I am astounded at the vast congregation who are invited to study these matters. The Air Ministry is the worst offender and I have marked a number who should be struck off at once, unless after careful consideration in each individual case it is found to be indispensable that they should be informed. I have added the First Lord, who of course must know everything known to his subordinates, and also the Secretary of State for War.”

Churchill continued: “A machinery should be constructed which makes other parties acquainted with such information as is necessary to them for the discharge of their particular duties. I await your proposals. I should also add Commander-in-Chief Fighter and Commander-in-Chief Bomber Command, it being clearly understood that they shall not impart them to any person working under them or allow the boxes to be opened by anyone save themselves.”

Within three weeks of Churchill’s minute to Ismay, the number of recipients of Enigma-based material had been fixed at thirty-one.

Churchill’s vigilance was continual. In September 1941, on reading the wide circulation given to a 7 a.m. summary of a series of decrypts giving the movement of German fuel ships in the Mediterranean between Naples and the North African port of Bardia, he wrote to Brigadier Stewart Menzies, Chief of the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6), and to the Army and Navy Chiefs of Staff: “Surely this is a dangerously large circulation. Why should anyone be told but the 3 C-in-Cs. They can give orders without giving reasons. Why should such messages go to subsidiary HQs in the Western Desert.”

When Churchill travelled outside London and overseas, the summaries and assessments of Enigma decrypts were sent on to him by courier or top-secret radio signal. When he was in Britain, translated summaries of the decrypts, and the Bletchley assessments, were sent him in locked buff-coloured boxes to which he alone had the key. None of his Private Office knew what the contents were.”
GOLDEN EGGS...

When he was in Britain, translated summaries of the decrypts, and the Bletchley assessments, were sent him in locked buff-coloured boxes to which he alone had the key. None of his Private Office knew what the contents were. As his Junior Private Secretary, John Colville, noted in his diary at Chequers in May 1941: “The PM, tempted by the warmth, sat in the garden working and glancing at me with suspicion from time to time in the (unwarranted) belief that I was trying to read the contents of his special buff boxes.”

Churchill made his first visit to Bletchley on 6 September 1941. His Principal Private Secretary, John Martin, who accompanied him in the car on their way to Oxfordshire for the weekend, did not enter the building, and had no idea what went on there.

Following his visit to Bletchley, Churchill received a letter, dated 21 October 1941, from four Bletchley cryptographers, Gordon Welchman, Stuart Milner-Barry, Alan Turing and Hugh O'D. Alexander. In their letter, they urged Churchill to authorize greater funding for the work they were doing. Manual decoding was extremely time-consuming. Turing believed that a machine he had devised—the “bombe,” then in its early days—could speed up the task considerably, but that more funding and more staff were needed. Milner-Barry later explained: “The cryptographers were hanging on to a number of keys by their coattails and if we had lost any or all of them there was no guarantee (given the importance of continuity in breaking) that we should ever have found ourselves in business again.”

In view of the exceptional secrecy, Milner-Barry took the letter by hand to 10 Downing Street. He later reflected: “The thought of going straight from the bottom to the top would have filled my later self with horror and incredulity.”

On receipt of the letter, Churchill wrote to the head of his Defence Office, General Ismay (his letter marked “Action This Day”): “Make sure they have all they want on extreme priority and report to me that this has been done.”

“Almost from that day,” Milner-Barry recalled, “the rough ways began to be made smooth. The flow of bombes was speeded up, the staff bottlenecks relieved, and we were able to devote ourselves uninterruptedly to the business in hand.”

Brigadier Menzies—who rebuked Gordon Welchman when they met for having “wasted fifteen minutes” of the Prime Minister’s time—reported to Churchill on November 18th that every possible measure was being taken. Bletchley’s needs were met.

Churchill, fully aware of the crucial role of Bletchley Park in averting defeat—and in due course, if all went well on the battlefield, to secure victory—had ensured that funds would be made available to improve the bombe, which was decisively to accelerate the decrypting of Enigma messages.

In the second week of March 1943, Enigma decrypts of German dispositions in the Mediterranean disclosed that four merchant vessels and a tanker, whose cargoes were described by Field Marshal Kesselring as “decisive for the future conduct of operations” in North Africa, would sail for Tunisia on March 12th and 13th, in two convoys.

Alerted by this decrypt, British air and naval forces sank the tanker and two of the merchant ships.

Unfortunately, before despatching the intercepting force, the British planners of the operation failed to provide sufficient alternative sightings, so as to protect the Enigma source. An Enigma decrypt on March 14th made it clear that the suspicions of the German Air Force had been aroused, and that a breach of security was being blamed for the loss of the vital cargoes. Churchill, reading this decrypt, minuted at once that the Enigma should be withheld unless it was “used only on great occasions or when thoroughly camouflaged.”

Fortunately for Britain, the Germans did not suspect that their Enigma secret was the cause of this apparent breach of their security. Nor did the Germans manage to break into Britain’s own Signals Intelligence system. Had they done so, they would have learned at once that Enigma had been compromised.

What to Tell the Americans?

Following the visit to Britain of President Roosevelt’s emissary Harry Hopkins, in January 1941, Churchill agreed that the United States could share information concerning Enigma, and could do so without delay. In February 1941 the Currier-Sinkov mission from the United States brought a Japanese Foreign Office “Purple” cypher machine and other codebreaking items to Bletchley, where Colonel Tiltman’s solutions of Japanese army cryptanalytic office in Washington DC. During Tiltman’s visit it became clear that the United States Navy wanted to attack the German naval “Shark” key, against which Bletchley had made almost no progress since the introduction of the four-rotor Enigma (M4) on 1 February 1942: this Shark key provided the German Navy with all top-secret communications with its submarines.

On 8 February 1942, Churchill wrote to Menzies: “Do the Americans know anything about our machine? Let me know by tomorrow afternoon.” Colonel Menzies replied
Intelligence: In the Great Drama, They Were the Greatest

THOMAS H. FLOWERS (1905-1998)
was the father of Colossus, the world’s first programmable computer, which helped solve the encrypted German messages. It was Flowers who provided the secret decrypts to Eisenhower the day before D-Day, revealing that Hitler was moving no additional troops to Normandy, believing it was not the target.

HUGH O’D. ALEXANDER (1909-1974)
was an Irish-born cryptanalyst more famous after the war as a master chess player. Arriving at Bletchley Park in February 1940, he played a key role at Hut 6, which broke the German Army and Air Force Enigma messages; then, at Hut 8, he broke the Naval Enigma. After the war he assisted MI5 in the Venona project to break Soviet codes.

MAX H.A. NEWMAN (1897-1984), a mathematician, was a pioneer of electronic digital computing. In 1943 he headed a new Bletchley section to counter the German Tunny teleprinter cipher device, increasingly used by Hitler and his top command after 1941, when they began to suspect Enigma was compromised.

JOHN TILTMAN (1894-1982) had worked with British Intelligence since the 1920s. Brigadier Tiltman had made a series of major breakthroughs against Japanese military ciphers from 1933 onwards. A strong advocate of British cryptology cooperation with the United States, he was affectionately known to both sides as “The Brig.”

WILLIAM GORDON WELCHMAN (1906-1985), a British-American mathematician and professor, came to Bletchley from Cambridge. He was one of the four “Wicked Uncles” (with Alexander, Turing and Stuart Milner-Barry) who in October 1941 urged the PM to provide more resources to Bletchley.

TELFORD TAYLOR (1908-1998) joined U.S. Army Intelligence as a Major in 1942 and led the American analysis of German communications using shared British Ultra encryptions. In 1943 he helped negotiate the Anglo-American BRUSA Agreement, secret until the mid-1990s. A lawyer, Taylor was a prosecution counsel at the Nuremberg Trials of Nazi war criminals. In the 1950s he was an outspoken critic of Senator Joseph McCarthy and, in the 1960s, of the war in Vietnam.

on the following day: “The American Naval Authorities have been given several of our Cypher Machines.”

In May 1942, Churchill approved Menzies’ agreement to help OP-20-G to work on the “Shark” key and other German Enigma circuits. OP-20-G eventually built more than a hundred four-rotor bombs that proved invaluable in solving—between June 1943 and April 1945—not only 2940 German Naval Enigma keys, but also 1600 German Army and Air Force Enigma keys, all of which were then read at Bletchley without interruption.

In June 1942, General Dwight D. Eisenhower arrived in Britain as Commander-in-Chief of the United States Forces then being assembled as a prelude to a cross-Channel assault. Churchill invited him to Chequers, where he personally briefed him on the work being done at Bletchley, to which, as a Commander-in-Chief, he would have access.

On 17 May 1943 the British-United States Agreement (BRUSA) was signed between Bletchley Park and the United States War Department. This came to be known as the “written constitution” of Anglo-American cryptanalysis. Its aim was “to exchange completely all information concerning the detection, identification and interception of signals from, and the solution of codes and ciphers used by, the Military and Air forces of the Axis powers, including secret services (Abwehr).” The United States assumed the “main responsibility” for the reading of Japanese military and air codes and ciphers (Magic), the British for reading the German and Italian signals traffic (Ultra). There would be total reciprocity, and total secrecy.

Following this agreement, Colonel Alfred McCormack and Lieutenant-Colonel Telford Taylor, from the United States Army’s Special Branch, were sent to Bletchley to see how the system there operated. It was not until September 1943, however, that Churchill finally persuaded Menzies that the BRUSA agreement should be operated without any restrictions, and that the United States Army in Washington should be sent—without restriction—all British Signals Intelligence material, including the Enigma and Geheimschreiber decrypts.

Riddle of the Balkans

Enigma-based knowledge was continuous, and called for many difficult decisions. The most difficult to confront Churchill and the War Cabinet, and those in receipt of Enigma-based information, related to the Balkans. In the last week of October and the first few days of November 1940, Enigma decrypts had made it clear that the German Air Force was building up facilities for German aircraft use in Romania and Bulgaria, both on the Danube and the Black Sea. This information was set out in a War Cabinet paper on 5 November 1940.

The possibility of a German attack on Greece, with whom Britain had a treaty of alliance, meant that British military, naval and air forces then protecting Egypt from >>
attack across the Western Desert would have to be diverted to Greece. Enigma-based evidence of an attack mounted. At the Defence Committee (Operations) meeting of 8 January 1941, where all present were privy to Enigma, Churchill noted that “all information pointed to an early advance by the German Army, which was massing in Roumania, with the object of invading Greece via Bulgaria.”

As a result of assessments being made at Bletchley, this and further Enigma decrypts in the following two days enabled Churchill to inform the Army and Air Force Commanders-in-Chief in the Middle East—General Wavell and Air Chief Marshal Longmore—that “a large-scale movement may begin on or soon after 20th March.” Enigma showed that the force that had been assembled for whatever action was planned included two armoured divisions and 200 dive bombers.

Enigma continued to confirm the German threat to Greece. A crucial decrypt on January 9th gave the news that German Air Force personnel were moving into Bulgaria to lay down telephone and teleprinter lines to the Bulgarian-Greek border along the main axis of advance towards Salonika. A decrypt of January 18 showed German Air Force hutments being sent to Bulgaria. A decrypt two days later showed that the German Air Force mission in Romania was discussing long-term arrangements for the supply of German Air Force fuel to depots in Bulgaria. As evidence mounted, a political decision was essential. The War Cabinet’s unanimous conclusion was that Britain must come to the aid of Greece, however hopeless that task might be. With Enigma, the facts were known well in advance, adding to the pressure for a decision. Without Enigma, the dilemma would not have arisen until too late.

German, Hungarian and Italian troops attacked Yugoslavia and Greece on 6 April 1941. By April 30th both nations had been overrun. Between April 24th and 30th, more than 30,000 British, Australian and New Zealand troops were evacuated to Crete, where they awaited a second German onslaught. On the 28th, Enigma revealed the German intention for an air-supported attack, and Churchill telegraphed to General Wavell, Commander-in-Chief, Middle East (then in Cairo): “It seems clear from our information that a heavy airborne attack by German troops and bombers will soon be made on Crete.”

It would be an entirely airborne attack. But how was the commander on Crete, New Zealand General Bernard Freyberg, who was not privy to Enigma, to be informed without endangering the source? On May 7th, Churchill proposed that Freyberg be sent actual texts of the decrypts relating to German plans for a parachute landing at Maleme Airport in Crete. This was done, but the Secret Intelligence Service warned Freyberg not to act on this information unless he had at least one non-Enigma source for it—lest the Germans realise that their own top-secret communicat-
of which had been proving virtually impossible to break. One such Enigma machine was on board the German trawler Krebs. Its commander, Lieutenant Hans Küpfinger, had managed to throw his machine overboard before he was killed. He had insufficient time, however, to destroy other elements of the Enigma message procedure, including his coding documents.

After three weeks’ intensive work at Bletchley, it became possible for British Intelligence to read all German naval traffic in Home Waters for the last week of April and much of May, with a relatively short delay of between three and seven days. By July German Naval Home Waters messages were being read with a maximum delay of seventy-two hours, and often with a delay of only a few hours.

On 6 April 1941, Churchill informed Roosevelt of a British naval success in the Mediterranean: A convoy of five German and Italian supply ships loaded with ammunition and transport vehicles was sunk, along with three Italian destroyer escorts, with the loss of only one British destroyer. The enemy supply ships were carrying units of the 15th Panzer Division to North Africa. The engagement constituted the first significant victory for Bletchley’s decrypting of the German Air Force Enigma in the Mediterranean shipping war. Henceforth, and with increasing impact, German and Italian high-grade ciphers were to contribute significantly to the sinking of Axis supply ships.

This Enigma window into German naval operations came, however, to an abrupt end. At the end of January 1942 the U-boats, which had hitherto used the same Enigma machine as other ships and authorities both in German home waters and in the Atlantic, acquired their own form of Enigma machine, unique to them. Suddenly, the U-boat’s most secret signals, which had been so carefully monitored at Bletchley since the summer of 1941, became unreadable once more, and were to remain unreadable for nearly a year, followed by a further six months irregularities and delays in decrypting.

This had dire consequences. In April 1941 more than seventy British merchant ships had been sunk; in May 1941 more than ninety; in June, sixty. By the end of July 1941, however, as a result of remarkable progress at Bletchley Park, all German U-boat instructions were being read continuously, and with little or no delay. As a result, transatlantic convoys could be routed away from the U-boat packs. For the rest of 1941, one major area of Churchill’s anguish was calmed.

By the end of August, British naval sinkings were further reduced by another cryptographic success, the breaking of the Italian naval high-grade cypher machine, “C.38m.” The first intelligence transmitted from Bletchley Park to the Middle East from this new source was sent to Cairo on June 23rd, giving details of the sailing of four liners from Italy to Africa with Italian troops.

In the ever-fluctuating fortunes of the war at sea, Churchill was kept fully informed of the secrets that Enigma revealed. Sometimes an Enigma message could pinpoint a British setback. On 3 September 1941, Churchill was shown an actual decrypt, which read: “Tanker Ossag to leave Bengazi evening 3rd September after discharging cargo of aviation fuel.” 30 Distressed that the tanker had not been attacked while on its way to Bengazi, Churchill noted that Admiral Cunningham, Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean Fleet, “should feel very sorry about this. It is a melancholy failure.” 31

On 16 February 1942, German Enigma messages revealed to Churchill that the three German warships which had escaped from the Atlantic port of Brest through the English Channel to their home ports had been badly damaged during their transit. He was unable to reveal this, although he was much criticised in Parliament and the press for allowing the ships to escape unscathed. As Churchill warned Roosevelt, “We cannot dwell too much on the damage they sustained”—damage, Churchill added, “you may have learned from most secret sources.” 32

From the U-boat menace, the nightmare of heavy sinkings returned on 1 February 1942, when a new Enigma machine came into service using a special cypher for the Atlantic and Mediterranean U-boats. The new cypher remained unbroken for more than ten months, until an Enigma machine was recovered with all its rotors. 33 This was a turning point for the naval codebreakers in Hut 8 at Bletchley, who passed on the new decrypts to the Naval Section in Hut 4, for translation, intelligence extraction and transmission to Brigadier Menzies, the Chief of the Naval Staff and Churchill.

The new German Naval Enigma came into being after—on at least two occasions—Allied success against the U-boat operations led Vice-Admiral Karl Dönitz, then Commander of the German Submarine Force, to investigate a possible security breach as the reason. Two breaches were considered most seriously: espionage, and Allied interception and decoding of the German Naval Enigma. Two investigations into communications security came to the conclusion espionage was more likely, unless there was a third reason, that the Allied success had been accidental. Nevertheless, as a precautionary measure, on 1 February 1942, Dönitz ordered his U-boat fleet to use an improved version of the Enigma machine—the M4—for communications within the Fleet.

The German Navy—of which Dönitz became the Commander-in-Chief in 1943—was the only branch of the German armed services to use this improved version; the German Army and Air Force continued to use their existing versions of Enigma. The new system, known to the Germans as “Triton,” was called “Shark” by the Allies.

This setback caused by “Shark,” coming at a time when the U-boat fleet was rapidly increasing in size, coincided with a move of the U-boats to what Churchill >>
called “American Waters”: the Atlantic west of the 40th Meridian, and the Caribbean. U-boat successes there for six consecutive months were largely responsible for an alarmingly sharp rise in the monthly rate of Allied merchant ship losses, especially of oil tankers. When, in the late summer of 1942, the U-boats turned once more against the Atlantic convoys, these losses were to reach unprecedented levels.

This second loss of the ability to decrypt top-secret German naval signals brought Britain’s food and war materials lifeline almost to a halt. For Churchill, as for those in the know about the full extent of the sinkings and the failure to read Enigma, this was a grave worry. On the evening of 18 November, Churchill presided at the first meeting of the newly established Anti-U-boat Warfare Committee, charged with finding some means to meet the relentless challenge of German submarine successes.

In October that same year, U-boats had sunk twenty-nine Allied ships in convoy and fifty-four ships sailing independently. In November the figure rose to thirty-nine ships in convoy, and seventy ships sailing independently. The total tonnage of Allied shipping lost to U-boat attack in November 1942 was 721,700 tons, the highest figure for any month of the war.

Turning the Tide

The reason for these U-boat successes was Bletchley’s inability to read the German Enigma key used in its U-boat communications. Then, on 30 October 1942, British destroyers attacked the German submarine U-559 on the surface in the Eastern Mediterranean, seventy miles off the Egyptian coast. While U-559 was sinking, two Royal Navy men, Lieutenant Tony Fasson and Able Seaman Colin Grazier, from the destroyer Petard, seized two vital Enigma codebooks. Unable to escape the sinking submarine, they managed to pass the codebooks to Canteen Assistant Tommy Brown. For their actions, Fasson and Grazier were each awarded the George Cross; Brown received the George Medal, the medal’s youngest recipient; it was discovered that he had been under age when he enlisted.

It took three weeks for the codebooks to reach Bletchley Park. When they did, the effect was dramatic. On 13 December 1942, a Sunday, the codebreakers in Hut 8 worked with as much intensity as they had ever worked to try to crack the M4 “Shark” cypher used by the Admiral Dönitz to communicate with his U-boats in the Atlantic. By midday, solutions of the four-rotor Enigma U-boat key began to emerge. During the afternoon, Hut 8 telephoned the Submarine Tracking Room at the Admiralty to report the breakthrough. Within an hour of this news, the first intercept came through: making known the position of fifteen U-boats in the Atlantic. Other intercepts arrived in a continuous stream until the early hours of the next morning. The Admiralty’s Submarine Tracking Room was once more able to route British convoys away from German U-boat concentrations.

As a result of this triumph of cryptography, in December 1942, the number of Allied vessels sunk by the U-boats fell to nineteen in convoy and twenty-five sailing individually. In January 1943 the figures had dropped to fifteen in convoy and eighteen independently, as a result of successful evasive routing of the known and located dangers.

In the Battle of the Atlantic, after a disastrous year, the fortunes of war had turned decisively in favour of the Allies. On 2 May 1943, Bletchley decrypted a telegram from General Oshima, the Japanese Ambassador in Berlin, reporting to Tokyo that Hitler, while hopeful of a renewed U-boat offensive, had complained to him that because the war had started too soon, “we have been unable to dominate the seas.” Two days later, in a lengthy battle, two U-boat packs attacked and sank twelve merchant ships in convoy (there were forty-one U-boats in the two packs, seventy merchant ships in the convoy).

This German success, the last on such a scale, was only achieved with the loss of seven of the U-boats. Not only did Enigma decrypts in the coming days confirm this loss, but also gave evidence of the growing U-boat fears both of Allied aircraft and of surface escorts.

Studying the Enigma decrypts relating to the Mediterranean, Churchill learned from German sources of the success of Bomber Command attacks on the Port of Tunis. Using the word “Boniface” to imply an Allied agent rather than Germany’s own top-secret signalling system, Churchill telegraphed to Air Marshal Tedder on May 2nd: “Boniface shows the decisive reactions produced upon the enemy, and that the little enemy ships are also important.”

These “little ships” were those in which, as the Enigma decrypts showed, supplies of fuel and ammunition were still reaching Tunis. Larger ships, being more visible from the air, were finding it impossible to get through.

In the Mediterranean on May 4th, as a result of an Enigma decrypt, British destroyers sank the Campobasso off Cape Bon, and on the following day, also alerted by Enigma, the United States Air Force sank the 6,000-ton San...
Antonio: the last large merchant ships to try to reach Tunis. As Churchill had foreseen, the Germans continued to try to use smaller craft, and even planned—as one Enigma decrypt showed on May 6th—to use U-boats to ferry fuel.

On July 8th, Churchill was able to telegraph to Stalin that in seventy days, fifty U-boats had been sunk. On the 14th, he reported to Roosevelt that seven U-boats had been sunk in thirty-six hours, "the record killing of U-boats yet achieved in so short a time." Guided by Enigma, the Battle of the Atlantic had been won by the Allies. Sixty British merchant ships had been sunk in March, thirty-four in April, thirty-one in May and eleven in June; the June figure confirmed that it was safe to release warships and merchant ships for all theatres of war, including the landings in Sicily, Italy and Normandy.

Churchill could offset the few failures at sea with many successes. Enigma helped to seal the fate of the German battleship Bismarck in May 1941, when 2300 German sailors perished, and the battle cruiser Scharnhorst in December 1943, when 1995 of her crew of 2200 were killed. Another naval challenge, the attempt to destroy the German battleship Tirpitz—the largest battleship ever built in Europe—as she sheltered in Norwegian waters, was reflected in many German Air Force Enigma messages: one, in April 1942, revealed German appreciation of a "most courageous" but ineffective attack that month by Bomber Command. Enigma played its part in the final, successful attack on Tirpitz by Bomber Command on 12 November 1944, when the pride of the German Navy capsized, and 1000 of her crew of 1700 were drowned.

Endnotes

1. War Office papers, WO 199/911A.
2. “German Preparations for Invasion”, 4 and 9 October 1940, War Office papers, WO 199/911A.
4. Secret Intelligence Service papers, series HW1.
7. John Colville, diary entry, 4 May 1941: Colville papers.
10. “Action This Day.” Hinsley and others, 657.
11. Dir/C Archives, No. 2592: Hinsley and others, 647.
13. Churchill’s comments on the Enigma decrypts are in the Secret Intelligence Service papers, reference HW1.
14. Office of Chief of Naval Operations (OPNAV): 20th Division of the Office of Naval Communications, G Section/Communications Security, was the U.S. Navy signals intelligence and cryptanalysis group during World War II. Its mission was to intercept, decrypt, and analyze naval communications from Japanese, German, and Italian navies. In addition, OP-20-G copied diplomatic messages of many foreign governments. Its branches included G-30 (Pacific Theater), G-40 (Atlantic Theatre), G-70 (Clandestine), G-80 (Strategic Information Coordination), GI-A (Correlation and Dissemination, Atlantic), GI-D (Correlation and Dissemination, Diplomatic), GI-P (Correlation and Dissemination, Pacific), GT (traffic analysis) and GY (cryptanalysis).
21. Decrypt CX/JQ 417, 1 November 1940, revealed German plans to install aircraft warning systems in Romania and Bulgaria.
22. War Cabinet Paper No. 431 of 1940, 5 November 1940, “Possibility of Enemy Advance through the Balkans and Syria.” Cabinet papers, 70/1.
23. Defence Committee (Operations), 8 January 1941: Cabinet papers, 69/2.
27. Decrypt CX/JQ 605.
30. Enigma decrypt CX/MSS/205/T2 of 3 September 1941.
31. 3 September 1941: SIS papers, HW1/43.
32. Prime Minister’s Personal Telegram No.257 of 1942, 16 February 1942: Churchill papers, 20/70.
33. For details of the ten Enigma machines recovered at sea see “The Capture of German Enigma Machines and Codebooks, 12 February 1940 - 4 June 1944” in Martin Gilbert, Atlas of the Second World War (New York: Routledge, 2008), Map 204.
34. Tommy Brown died later in the war, in Britain, trying to rescue his two sisters from a burning building.
35. Secret Intelligence Service archive, series HW1.
37. “Personal and Most Secret,” Prime Minister’s Personal Telegram No. 975 of 1943, 8 July 1943: Churchill papers, 20/114.
39. “Sink the Bismarck” was Churchill’s instruction following the sinking of the British battle cruiser Hood by Bismarck on 24 March 1941, with 1415 deaths (and only three survivors). During the sinking of Scharnhorst three days later, the Staff Officer (Intelligence) on board the battleship Duke of York was Edward Thomas, later one of the historians of British Signals Intelligence.
40. Decrypt 0011 of 29 April 1942.
Early in World War II I joined the Home Guard, and in 1942 enlisted in the Women’s Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF). For close to a year I was assigned to what I was told was the “RAF War Room” in King Charles Street, London. I was forbidden to mention its name to friends or relatives, and permitted only to say that it was “an office in London.” Only later did we learn that this was Winston Churchill’s Cabinet War Rooms.

By sheer luck, on one of the shifts and with nothing to do at that moment, I happened to be drawing a rose on a sheet of paper at my typist’s desk when a bespectacled gentleman walked by. “Do you like drawing?” he asked. I said yes, and he replied, “Come and work in my department.” Without asking anything more, I accompanied him to an obscure office even further down in the War Rooms, staffed by three gentlemen. They said they had been geography schoolmasters in civilian life. (If this was a cover-up, I shall never know.)

I was not told exactly what they were doing, but it involved maps, maps, and more maps. They were nicknamed “Churchill’s three draughtsmen.” I remember one very well: a tall man named LeFevre-Pope. My job was completing headings for the maps before they were given over to these geography experts.

I purchased pens and ink at a shop in Queen Anne’s Gate. Among my tasks was to complete the tiny flags on maps that marked ships or submarines sunk in the Atlantic. I also made door nameplates for recuperating combat pilots, unhappy to be idle. One young Scottish pilot, Wing Commander Baird-Smith, rang one day, yawning: “Where is my nameplate? Wing Commander Bored-Stiff here.”

When the maps were completed, with whatever secret markings the three gentlemen made on them, they were rolled up and sealed. I sometimes took them upstairs to be sent to the Prime Minister’s Map Room. Occasionally I was allowed to hand them to an officer in the Map Room itself.
In July 1943 I was posted to a typing pool at Danesfield in Medmenham, outside London, with wonderful views of the Thames. A neo-Tudor house built in 1899, it is now a hotel and spa. Its 300 rooms and extensive grounds had been commandeered for the war effort. Danesfield served as the Allied Central Intelligence Unit (ACIU), devoted to photographic intelligence. I was assigned to an office called “K Section” in one of its tall turrets, and I was the only shorthand typist from the ranks. Again we had to have a cover story. We were told to say we were in “Maintenance Command.”

K Section was staffed by RAF and American Intelligence officers, and three WAAF officers—one of whom was Section Officer Sarah Oliver,* daughter of the Prime Minister. A few times—whenever she disappeared—we knew that Mr. Churchill had probably gone overseas, since Sarah often accompanied him as aide de camp—as did her sister Mary, now Lady Soames, on other occasions.

Day and night, following the bombing raids over Germany, our officers would interpret photographs taken by surveillance planes from Lossiemouth, Scotland or fighter aircraft from Benson, Oxfordshire, sent down to us by dispatch riders or Jeeps in relays. At Medmenham, they were printed from negatives onto foil photographic sheets.

My job was to collect each box-load of photographs from various raids, sometimes putting them together with a kind of Sellotape before passing them to an officer. Using the photos as evidence, the officers would then estimate and report on the damage and recommend whether a site should be retargeted. It was grim but necessary work.

*Sarah Churchill, later Lady Audley (1914-1982) was married to the comedian and singer Vic Oliver from 1936 to 1945.

Section Officer Sarah Oliver sat at a desk to my right. She often drafted reports on the raids for me to type in final form. Her work included interpreting photos with special glasses that gave a three-dimensional impression, which helped to assess the damage more efficiently.

I had an electric typewriter, a great novelty at the time, provided by the Americans. The officers would either dictate reports or hand me handwritten drafts to type. There were three shifts, and I could select the shift I wanted to be on; since I was the only shorthand typist available, I was kept very busy the whole time.

There was a lovely young American officer whom I think was rather fond of Sarah Oliver. He would pop over and sometimes kiss my forehead or chat, but then promptly went over to her. (I think I was a wee decoy.)

Having many friends in the theatre, including Sheila van Damm of the Windmill Theatre in London, Sarah liked to arrange concerts for personnel stationed at RAF Medmenham and Nuneham. She even recruited me as a chorus girl, although not of the Windmill variety….**

Occasionally when bombers were on a special raid such as Dresden and Berlin, we were “locked in,” whichever shift was on; once they had reached their destination, we were told where they were and permitted to leave for lunch or whatever. After the bombers returned, reconnaissance aircraft were sent out, flying low to take photographs at great risk to pilots and crew. >>

**Sheila van Damm (1922-1987) was trained as a WAAF driver in the war, and began driving competitively in 1950. She won the Coupes des Dames, highest award for women, in the 1953 Alpine and 1955 Monte Carlo Rallies, and was Women’s European Touring Champion in 1954. The Windmill, which she managed and later owned from 1960 onwards, was notorious for its nude stage revues and fan dances, inspired by the Folies Bergères and Moulin Rouge in Paris.

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DANESFIELD, MEDMENHAM. Above: Myra worked in a top window of one of the turrets, overlooking the Thames. Photographs were printed and kept in the ground floor library—a long walk to collect them. The flower gardens were beautifully maintained throughout the war. Returning at midnight from the “Dog and Badger” with her American boyfriend, Sergeant Betty Palmer stepped into the fish pond in error, and began screaming as the huge goldfish swam round her legs! Right: The author, right, with a fellow WAAF.
We WAAFs slept in Nissen huts, ten to fifteen in a hut. Many smoked, and with two coke fires going and the windows shut, it’s a wonder we survived. The officers had better accommodations, with their own mess canteen and batmen to look after them.

On one memorable occasion the Prime Minister himself visited us at Medmenham, perhaps to see what Sarah was doing. We were set to smartening up the base. Men painted stones white along the route into Danesfield, while we WAAFs picked up refuse using sticks with nails on the ends. Sarah rallied round in charge of us, collecting rubbish with great gusto, and we respected her very much for doing this dirty chore.

My time at Medmenham was interrupted by a case of jaundice. When I returned from hospital, Sarah Oliver offered me a private convalescent flat in London. I felt this would be an imposition, so she arranged for me to recover at the Duke of Hamilton’s Dungavel Castle in Scotland, a rest home for WAAFs during the war. (Deputy Führer Rudolf Hess was attempting to contact this same Duke in his notorious flight to Britain in May 1941.)

Recuperated, I was posted to Nuneham Park, a Palladian villa at Nuneham Courtenay, Oxford, built in 1756 for the First Earl Harcourt. Now owned by Oxford University, it was requisitioned in 1940 by the Ministry of Defence for photographic reconnaissance interpretation.

Stationed in a room over the main door, I was set to decyphering and typing out, from scruffy bits of paper, notes by prisoners of war, mainly held by the Japanese—I presume to be put in a War Museum. The American pilots who were stationed at Nuneham Park (known as Pattern Makers Architectural), were taught how to make plaster cast models of buildings in areas targeted for bombing in the Far East, so they had more than just a photograph to go by. Some of us WAAFs befriended them and showed them around the local area.

At Nuneham, I was again recruited by Sarah Oliver as a chorus girl for one of the regular concerts. I was cast as a mermaid, luring an ATS officer to her death at the bottom of the sea! Foil photos were cut into scales to make my “fish tail,” which I was told not to “rustle” as I walked across the stage. This was Sarah Oliver’s idea. She was full of fun and lovely to work and be with, although as an officer we always called her “Ma’am.”

When the war ended, I was posted to Coastal Command Headquarters at Pinner, Middlesex, where I worked for six young grounded aircrew officers. Group Captain MacBratney, who was a disciplinarian very much like the Prime Minister, promoted me to Corporal. I enjoyed working for him. Sadly I did not see Section Officer Sarah Oliver again, although my friend Gill Clarkson, who was also in our concerts, became a singer at the Windmill and married a singer there.

Sarah Oliver was a petite, smart figure in her uniform, with auburn hair in a pageboy bob. She had a quiet and kind nature, and was always approachable for advice. One respected her rank, and she was a joy to work for. I shall always consider it an honour to have worked at the War Rooms and with the Prime Minister’s daughter at Medmenham, as well as in her concerts. That experience was my university—without the exams.

FINEST HOUR 149 / 30
The hundreds of wartime messages between Churchill and Roosevelt are well known and documented. Not as well appreciated is that these text messages, sent by secure teletype, diplomatic cable, or courier, represent only a part of top-level wartime communication. For the two leaders there was another, faster way to communicate across the Atlantic: the telephone. Protecting the security of those messages gave rise to the SIGSALY system—regarded as the “pioneering work” in digital technology by the U.S. National Security Agency. 1

In the Beginning

When the British General Post Office and American Telephone & Telegraph opened the first commercial radio telephone links in 1927, charges for their use were very high: $75 or £15 for three minutes, about $900 in today’s values. Trained operators were required to make the complex connections. And, because they relied upon radio transmission (the first telephone cables entered service only in 1956), security was a serious problem.

Any radio transmission can be intercepted and its coded signals broken, as the British learned early in World War II from Bletchley Park’s “Ultra” codebreaking effort. Security considerations greatly limited the use of transatlantic telephone calls in the war’s first two years, requiring close monitoring to ensure that vital information did not reach enemy ears.

Nevertheless, the telephone was literally the only way to communicate over vast distances. Churchill particularly depended on it, often to the despair of people he was talking to (see “Joys of the Scrambler” overleaf). At first the Allies tried to protect essential voice traffic with the A-3 >>

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SIGSALY... voice-scrambling system developed for its commercial telephone users by AT&T. Based on 1920s analog technology, it was not nearly secure enough for communicating military secrets.²

Well aware of A-3’s shortcomings, American and British signals experts insisted that the voice link only be used with carefully controlled code words, so as not to reveal pending plans and operations to enemy listeners. Many senior commanders who telephoned often forgot the warning, only to be reminded by a censor interrupting their call. In a March 1942 memo to Churchill’s senior staff, the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Edward Bridges, warned of the dangers of unguarded reliance on transatlantic radiotelephone service.³

The fame of Bletchley Park obscures the fact that the enemy was listening, too, and also had its technical wizards. Germany’s Deutsche Reichpost had established a listening station on the Dutch coast by early 1941. German Intelligence developed technical means to detect Allied transatlantic signals, and eventually could decode their content as they were being sent. Captured records at the end of the war showed just how good the enemy listening activity was: The Germans had recorded complete transcripts of many calls between senior Allied military figures, and even some between Churchill and Roosevelt.⁴

The telephone nevertheless remained in use throughout the war because it was simply indispensable, being available at all hours. Censors closely monitored whatever anyone, Churchill included, might say on the line.

AT&T, understanding the limitations of its A-3 scrambler, began seeking a better system as early as 1936. Though many schemes had been patented, none provided absolute security. In New Jersey, the Bell Laboratories research team, headed by A.B. Clark, focused on developing a way to turn voice signals into digital data—this at a time when digital technology was more theoretical than practical.

Homer Dudley, a Bell research physicist, eventually created a “Vocoder” (voice coder) device to convert analog voice sounds into digital signals while preserving “some” voice quality. An early prototype was demonstrated at the 1939 World’s Fair. Research on a viable transmission system was initiated as “Project X” in 1940.⁵

Shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and America’s entry into the war, Bell technicians demonstrated their system to the U.S. Army Signal Corps. The Army issued a contract to build the two trial devices. The first prototype was completed in August 1942.⁶ Its manufacturing priority was high and security was extremely tight. Indeed, only after high-level negotiations was Bletchley Park computer authority Dr. Alan Turing allowed even to see the device, and report his evaluation to Churchill in London.⁷

As confidence in its ability grew, six terminals had been ordered by late 1943.

Joys of the Scrambler: Fitzroy Maclean and the PM

An American WAC sergeant explained that our conversation would be scrambled, and that we could speak freely without fear of being overheard by the enemy. Mr. Churchill’s well-known voice soon came booming over the ether.

“Have you spoken to Pumpkin?”

“Pumpkin, Prime Minister? I’m afraid I don’t understand what you mean.”

“Why that great big general of mine. And what have you done with Pippin?”

There was a pause, interrupted only by the inhuman wailing and crackling of the ether.

Then, projected over the air, from Downing Street to Washington, and then back to North Africa, came quite distinctly an exclamation of horror and disgust.

“Good God, they haven’t got the Code!”

A few moments later the Prime Minister was back on the air. Shall we scramble?” he asked gaily.

“I’m afraid, Prime Minister, that I am scrambled.”

There was a rumbling noise, followed by silence, and Mr. Churchill’s voice came through again: “So am I.”

After which, much to my relief, we were able to talk normally...though he continued to refer to Field Marshal Wilson, a rather portly officer, as “Pumpkin” and to his son, Randolph, as “Pippin.” The two pseudonyms seemed to give him the greatest pleasure.

Having laid down the receiver with relief after this unnerving experience, I started up the stairs of our dugout but then turned back to collect something I’d forgotten. As I opened the door, I was startled to hear my own voice coming through it.

“Pumpkin, Prime Minister?”….The pretty American sergeant was playing our conversation back to herself, rocking with laughter. “And in an English accent, too,” I heard her say.

The SIGSALY System

To operate this complex system, the U.S. Army 805th Signal Service Company was formed and intensively trained by AT&T personnel. The 805th comprised eighty-one officers, mostly lieutenants and captains, and 275 technical and master sergeants. Eventually, teams of five officers and ten enlisted men (many of whom had worked for the Bell System before the war) were assigned to keep each of the system terminals operating “full-time” (usually eight hours a day, since the devices required rigid maintenance and testing the rest of the time). Security rules stated that only American personnel have access to the equipment—a qualification that gave the British pause, but didn’t interfere with operations.8

Some time in late 1942, the code name SIGSALY was attached to the project. Not an acronym, though it resembled one, it was simply a cover, the SIG being common in Army Signal Corps terminology. Operators called prototypes “Green Hornets” (after a popular American radio melodrama), for the buzzing sound heard by anyone attempting to eavesdrop on the conversation. After the war it was learned that the Germans had recorded SIGSALY transmissions, but were unable to decode the signals.

As fully developed, the analog vacuum-tube powered SIGSALY equipment was huge—some forty racks of vacuum tube-powered electrical equipment weighing about fifty-five tons, taking up 2500 square feet and requiring 30,000 watts of power. Because of the many heat-producing tubes and circuits, each terminal was air conditioned—a rare service in World War II.9

SIGSALY equipment for London was shipped on HMT Queen Elizabeth in May 1943. It was far too bulky to be squeezed into the offices housing Churchill’s Downing Street Annex above the Cabinet War Rooms, let alone the cramped bunker below ground. Space was found about a mile away in the basement of Selfridge’s Annex on Oxford Street, where the Americans had set up a military communications center. An underground cable linked the two sites.

General Sir Hastings Ismay, the PM’s chief of staff, kept Churchill informed on the system’s progress, including several early test failures as operators came up to speed with the complex device. It was highly secret. Fewer than twenty-five of the most senior British civilian and military leaders were cleared to use the London terminal.10 Installation and testing of SIGSALY in Washington, and at Eisenhower’s headquarters in Algiers, also began in the spring of 1943.

SIGSALY entered service in mid-July 1943 with a military teleconference between London and Washington.11 The latter had extensions to the White House (Roosevelt had decided against installing the main terminal there, knowing Churchill’s working hours) and the Navy building on Constitution Avenue. Heavy traffic finally required a second SIGSALY terminal at the Pentagon. As the Allies gained ground against Germany, SIGSALY terminals were also placed in Paris, Frankfurt and, after V-E day, Berlin.

In the Pacific, the system was used by 1944 with terminals in Oakland, Honolulu and Brisbane (Gen. MacArthur’s initial headquarters in Australia). After their recapture, systems were set up in Guam (to control B-29 raids, including the atomic bomb missions), Manila (MacArthur’s final headquarters), and finally Tokyo. One terminal was even aboard a ship, following MacArthur’s island-hopping campaign. All told, a dozen SIGSALY sites supported 3000 top-secret teleconferences, chiefly among military commanders.

Churchill himself appears not to have used SIGSALY until April 1944, and thereafter only very occasionally, tending to prefer the old-fashioned scrambler, with all its potential risk.12 Ruth Ive, one of the high-level telephone monitors who recently published a book on her experiences, suggests several reasons for this:

Aside from the need to enter the War Rooms in the afternoon to use the dedicated telephone room (there was no link to Downing Street) Ive believes that Roosevelt did not want to be placed “on the spot,” with no time to consider issues or problems. She also reports that other than Churchill and Eden, no civilian War Cabinet members or Ministry personnel were authorized. Churchill did use SIGSALY to place his first call to Truman after Roosevelt’s
SIGSALY ESSENTIALS: A simplified overview of a one-way transmission. Return transmissions used the same key setup. (National Security Agency/Central Security Service)

TEAMWORK: For special training of SIGSALY operators, the U.S. Army Signal Corps established the 805th Signal Service Company. This special company had the highest average grade of any company in World War II. (National Security Agency/Central Security Service)

death in April 1945. Two weeks later, they had a two-hour discussion concerning tentative German surrender offers—the longest call ever made over SIGSALY equipment.  

Aftermath

As the Allies neared victory, the heavy SIGSALY terminals were gradually removed from service and returned to the U.S., starting with the Algiers equipment in 1944, as Eisenhower had shifted his headquarters to Britain. The London facility was “recovered” on 31 October 1945. Since the technology was still unknown to any other nations, the system remained highly secret for three more decades (two years, indeed, longer than Bletchley Park’s codebreaking role).

SIGSALY was first made public in news accounts in mid-1976, when more than thirty Bell Labs patents (many applied for between 1941 and 1945) were finally granted. The system is recognized today as a technical pioneer for its initial use of numerous techniques which are widely used in telecommunications. When the Cabinet War Rooms were being prepared for public tours in the 1980s, Bell Labs provided detailed advice on the SIGSALY telephone set that appears today in the underground room Churchill used in his occasional trans-Atlantic talks with Roosevelt.

Despite continuing secrecy, Bell Labs won several contemporary awards for its work, including “Best Signal Processing Technology” in 1946. Since SIGSALY was still classified, attendees at the awards ceremony simply had to accept the verdict of the judges that this was something of crucial importance. A.B. Clark, a key player with Bell Labs and by then Director of Research and Development at the National Security Agency, delivered his acceptance speech over a coded phone line: “Phrt fdgyui jsowria meegm wuiosn jxolw ps fuekswusijnvkc! Thank you!”

Endnotes

3. Donald Mehl, SIGSALY: The Green Hornet—The World War II Unbreakable Code for Secret High-Level Telephone Conferences (Kansas City: privately published, 1997), 17. Mehl was one of the Signal Corps officers who worked with SIGSALY during the war.
5. Fagen, 291-312.
6. Fagen, 310.
7. Mehl, 66-71, quotes many of the relevant letters in this controversy. Ive, 109, describes the Turing visit, but incorrectly identifies him as the “director” of Bletchley Park, which he never was.
9. “Signal Corps Fixed Communications in World War II: Special Assignments and Techniques. Washington: Signal Corps Historical Section (Project E-10), December 1945,” 33. A copy of this once-secret study is in the AT&T/Bell Labs Archives. Thanks to Dr. James Spurlock for this source.
10. The location, access, and use issues were all controversial: see Mehl, 72-77.
14. “Signal Corps Fixed…” Appendix A.
16. Mehl, 51-53 cites several other sources. See also the list of firsts in Boone & Patterson, 3-4.
Intelligence Today: What We Can Learn

The Churchill Centre has always tried to avoid suggesting what Churchill would have to say about contemporary situations, which would be pure conjecture. But much can be learned from considering similar episodes in Churchill’s career, and his responses to them.

DAVID FREEMAN

In the summer of 2010 the alleged non-profit website WikiLeaks published 77,000 classified documents snatched from Pentagon computers that related to the war in Afghanistan. Unredacted, the material included the names of Afghan informants who had been cooperating with Coalition Forces. A Taliban spokesman told The New York Times that a commission had been formed “to find out about people who are spying” and report the results to a Taliban court.1

The founder and proprietor of WikiLeaks, 39-year-old Australian Julian Assange, remained defiant about his decision to publish the documents even as Amnesty International and Reporters Without Borders joined the Pentagon (an unusual combination) in criticizing an action that potentially endangers those Afghans whose names were published. Other workers at WikiLeaks have publicly broken with their colleague over his behavior.

Mr. Assange is now in serious trouble. The U.S. government is weighing a possible prosecution under the 1917 Espionage Act, and Australian officials have made it clear to Mr. Assange that they will support any such action.

Welcomed initially in Sweden, Assange had to leave Stockholm after accusations of sexual assault that could lead to another prosecution. When Finest Hour went to press, Assange was in Switzerland, where he was contemplating an application for asylum.

What does all this have to do with Winston Churchill? There are two Churchillian aspects to it, one general and one specific.

The preceding articles by Sir Martin Gilbert and David Stafford (pages 12-27) show in detail that Churchill very properly took great care in safeguarding intelligence sources. Whatever the ultimate fate of Mr. Assange, surely the real concern now must be with determining how it >>

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"For Churchill, the real question in 1951 was why Burgess and Maclean not only continued to be employed after 1945...but even received promotion to highly sensitive positions...."

INTELLIGENCE TODAY...

was possible for his organization to acquire classified material in the first place.

As is so often the case, Churchill’s story provides an example of a similar breach of security, and how he reacted to it. In the spring of 1951, intelligence officers Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean vanished from Britain. It was five years before Russian leader Nikita Khrushchev finally admitted that they were in the USSR, but suspicion set in immediately that Burgess and Maclean had been spying for the Soviets while employed by the British government.

As Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, Churchill concentrated on essentials. The real question, he said, was not the motivation or ultimate fate of the traitors. “I don’t think he was much interested,” recalled his private secretary Sir John Colville. “In fact I had to press him to ask the Cabinet Office to provide a Note on the incident.”

That Burgess and Maclean were homosexuals did not trouble Churchill, except to raise his natural sympathy. His personal private secretary, Sir Anthony Montague Browne, recalled that Churchill felt “homosexuals might indeed be a security risk, not so much because they might be subject to blackmail, but because they often feel themselves alien and apart from the mainstream of the country.”

Nor was there much question as to how Burgess and Maclean had come to be employed by the British government in the first place. “Our vetting procedures in those days were primitive and sloppy,” recalled Sir Anthony, himself a Foreign Office veteran. During the war, he wrote, “the Soviets had been our involuntary allies, which made it easier for those concerned to condone a background that would later be considered deeply suspect.”

For Churchill, the real question in 1951 was why Burgess and Maclean not only continued to be employed by the British government after 1945, when relations with the Soviet Union dramatically changed, but even received promotion to highly sensitive positions that should have triggered assessments of their job performances up to that time. Burgess in particular was long notorious in Whitehall for his alcohol-induced indiscretions.

Seeking an answer to Churchill’s key point, Peter Thorneycroft put down a question in the House of Commons for the Foreign Secretary, Herbert Morrison, on 9 July 1951. Morrison attempted to evade the issue of when the traitors received postwar promotions by stating the Government had no awareness of the two men having any Communist associations at the time they received their original appointments to the Foreign Office: October 1935 for Maclean and June 1944 for Burgess.

Churchill intervened to say that Morrison had not answered Thorneycroft’s question. On what dates, he repeated, had Burgess and Maclean received their postwar appointments? Morrison continued to prevaricate so Churchill pressed harder. When Morrison merely repeated the dates of the original appointments, Churchill began moving in for the kill: “We must all profit by the advice of the Rt. Hon. Gentleman. He has given two dates: why can he not give the other two?”

The Foreign Secretary foolishly responded with the legalistic defense that Thorneycroft’s original question as submitted in writing asked for no such dates. Churchill, of course, had been Prime Minister, and Morrison Home Secretary, in the wartime coalition when the employment of Maclean had continued and Burgess had first received his own appointment. Churchill waved this aside with the observation that “failures may always occur,” but that did not mean that Morrison could then “shuffle off all responsibility” and “not give the other two dates,” that is, those from the postwar period.

Morrison, however, stuck to his legalistic guns and Churchill closed the trap: “Will the Rt. Hon. Gentleman give the dates of these two specific appointments if a Question is put on the Order Paper?”

Having painted himself into a corner, the Foreign Secretary was forced to capitulate: “If a Question is on the Order Paper I shall be most happy to answer it.”

As Leader of the Opposition, Churchill had the responsibility to force the Government to attend to the point that really mattered: determining when and why there had been a failure in security. Only this could lead to the constructive reforms necessary to prevent future recurrences.

Historians naturally concentrate on Churchill’s time as a Cabinet minister and his opposition to Appeasement during his Wilderness Years. In this episode, though, we see that late in his career and in a very different sort of parliamentary role, Churchill still had the capacity to look past the sensational and focus on what was most important. In so doing he discharged his responsibilities to the nation while maintaining the highest standards of the Mother of Parliaments.

**Endnotes**

4. Ibid., 61.
5. Parliamentary Debates (Hansard), House of Commons, 9 July 1951, cols. 33-34.
It floats around the Internet that according to Churchill, Britain served in the Second World War as an “unsinkable aircraft carrier.” The phrase does not however track to Churchill.

John Charmley, in Churchill’s Grand Alliance: The Anglo-American Special Relationship 1940-1957 (New York: Harcourt, 1995) appropriated the line for his own in arguing that Britain served American interests by lending territory for American air bases. Laurence Thompson, in 1940 (New York: Morrow, 1966), used the phrase earlier, declaring that Germany’s defeat would not have been possible without UK bases. But neither was the originator.


…the American forces identified themselves whole-heartedly with local interest. In one village they subscribed most generously to funds for rebuilding a church which had been heavily bombed. The work was completed some years after the end of the war, and the Re-dedication Service was broadcast and relayed to America. The general who had commanded the troops in that area was an interested listener, but he blew up in fury when he heard the bishop observe, in the course of his address, how fortunate they had been in having the “succour from America.” He switched off abruptly, vowing that never again would he do anything for such so-and-so’s. The British Isles had already proved a gigantic—and unsinkable—aircraft-carrier. They now had to fulfill the additional role of a gigantic ordnance depot.

Greatest Man in the World?

Current discussion about the younger generation (See “Datelines… The Youth Vote,” page 8) brings to mind the story about a child who allegedly confronted Churchill at Chartwell and asked something like this: “Are you the greatest man in the world?” Churchill allegedly replied, “Yes I am. Now bugger off.” Is it true?

—STAN A. ORCHARD, VIA EMAIL

Editor’s response: Yes. From our report on the House of Commons Churchill Dinner, 2 June 1990, the editor’s maiden (and only) speech; Finest Hour 67:

I am honored to be asked to speak here, something I could have never have imagined, knowing that such honors are fleeting, remembering the time Sir Winston was shooting pheasants on the estate of the old Duke of Westminster.

“How many did you shoot?” the Duke asked him.

“Four,” Churchill replied.

“Indeed,” said the Duke, “Then you’ve shot enough, and I will have your carriage ordered for tomorrow morning.”

So before my carriage is summoned, I would like to share with you the excitement that has engulfed the International Churchill Societies during this memorable anniversary year. [A long report on Churchill Society activities followed.]

We are always amazed at the numbers of young people who join us, who have so early in life come to know him either through his writings or by the endless stories about him. One of these, only eighteen, told us recently what first got him interested. (So many of these stories are apocryphal; perhaps Lady Soames will tell us if it’s true.)

A schoolboy at Chartwell, eluding all security, found himself in Sir Winston’s bedroom, the occupant propped up, riffling through the newspapers and puffing an enormous cigar.

“My papa says you’re the greatest man in the world,” offered the boy. “Is it true?”

Sir Winston peered at him over his spectacles and said, “Of course—now buzz off.”

Now I am told that in fact he used a rather more earthy phrase than that. But in deference to my surroundings I have done a little editing.

P.S.: Lady Soames tells me it’s true. [Privately she said that the questioner was none other than her son Nicholas, now an MP in his own right.]

He certainly was the greatest man in the world for the longest time, and his truth, in the words of the American hymn he loved, goes marching on.
125 Years Ago
Winter 1885-86 • Age 11
“Making a wonderful fight”

In Belfast on 26 February, Lord Randolph appeared obliquely to urge Ulster to resist Home Rule by force. While he didn’t utter those precise words in his speech, he made clear in a letter several weeks later that “Ulster will not be a consenting party. Ulster at the proper moment will resort to the supreme arbitration of force. Ulster will fight, Ulster will be right!” [Italics added].

In March, Winston contracted pneumonia. His son wrote that he “was at this time closer to death than at any time during his daring and adventurous life.” On the 14th his temperature was 104.3, and still over 103 the next day. Dr. Roose wrote to Lord Randolph: “Your boy, in my opinion, on his perilous path is holding his own well, right well! There can now be no cause for anxiety for some hours (12 at least) so please have a good night, as we are armed at all points.”

By the morning of March 16th, Winston’s temperature had dropped and Roose wrote: “....the left lung [is] still uninvolved, the pulse shows still good power and the delirium I hope may soon cease and natural sleep occur....your boy is making a wonderful fight and I so feel please God he will recover.” Winston’s fever broke that night Roose reported that he had enjoyed “6 hours quiet sleep. Delirium has now ceased. Temp: 99, P[ulse] 92 respiration 28. He sends you and her ladyship his love.”

100 Years Ago
Winter 1910-11 • Age 36
“What was the Rt. Hon. Gentleman doing?”

The burglary of a London jewelry shop in early 1911 was led by a Russian Anarchist “Peter the Painter” and two accomplices. When six police arrived to arrest them, they shot and killed three. The killers then made their way to 100 Sidney Street in London’s East End, where they were cornered by the police now armed with revolvers. The thieves, however, had Mauser rifles and opened fire, killing another policeman. More firepower was called in: twenty Scots Guards from the Tower of London. Thus began the famous “Siege of Sidney Street.”

Churchill, the Home Secretary, was at home when the siege began but quickly went to the siege, which he subsequently described to Asquith: “...a striking scene in a London street—firing from every window, bullets chipping the brickwork, police and Scots Guards armed with loaded weapons artillery brought up etc.”

While Churchill did not personally take charge of the operations, as his political opponents later claimed, he was no passive observer. As he wrote to the coroner: “I made it my business however, after seeing what was going on in front to go round the back of the premises and satisfy myself that there was no chance of the criminals effecting their escape through the intricate area of walls and small houses at the back....”

The house caught fire while Churchill was out back and the police told the fire brigade not to battle the blaze. Two of the gang died inside but Churchill’s doubt of any escapes may have been incorrect because “Peter the Painter’s” body was never found.

Churchill supported the police decision not to fight the fire, and confirmed this to a fire brigade officer: “From what I saw it would have meant loss of life and limb to any fire brigade officer who had gone within effective range of the building....I had not in any way interfered with the arrangements made by the police. I was only there to support them in any unusual difficulty as a covering authority.”

Notwithstanding Churchill’s explanations, newsreel coverage captured his lively presence at the scene, prompting the Conservative leader Arthur Balfour to remark in the Commons: “[Mr. Churchill] and a photographer were both risking valuable lives. I understand what the photographer was doing, but what was the Rt. Hon. Gentleman doing?”

SIDNEY STREET:
Immaculate in top hat and great coat, the Home Secretary (▼) observes the exchange of gunfire in the January 2nd siege. Churchill came in for some criticism for placing himself in the danger zone.
This winter proved as bad for Churchill’s political career as it was for the peace of Europe.

Churchill was in Barcelona when a political storm broke over the Hoare-Laval Pact between Britain, France and Italy, conceived by the anti-Nazi Sir Robert Vansittart, whereby Abyssinia was to surrender 20 percent of its territory to the invading Italians. It was initially supported by Prime Minister Baldwin and the Cabinet, but public opinion forced them to back down. As a result, Samuel Hoare resigned as foreign secretary and was replaced by Anthony Eden on 23 December.

Churchill took no position publicly on the Hoare-Laval Pact but his postwar memoirs suggest some sympathy for Vansittart’s rationale, i.e., that Germany was a greater danger, and that having Italy as a friend was in both countries’ strategic interest. Churchill was unimpressed with Eden’s appointment, having preferred Austen Chamberlain. As he wrote to his wife on 8 January: “I think you will now see what a light-weight Eden is.”

While Clementine returned home from Barcelona for Christmas at Chartwell, Churchill went to Tangier and from there to Marrakesh, where he spent four days with Lloyd George. Writing to his wife on the aftermath of the Hoare-Laval affair, he was pessimistic: “We are getting into the most terrible position, involved definitely by honour & by contract in almost any quarrel that can break out in Europe, our defences neglected, our Government less capable a machine for conducting affairs than I have ever seen. The Baldwin-MacDonald regime has hit this country very hard indeed, and may well be the end of its glories.”

That same day brought more bad news: His son Randolph accepted the local Conservative Party’s request to stand as a candidate in a Scottish by-election in Ross and Cromarty against Ramsay MacDonald’s son Malcolm, a cabinet minister in the National Government. Churchill had mistakenly thought that his son would decline out of deference to his father’s hopes for a cabinet post. As he had earlier written his wife, “it would put a spoke in my wheel & do nothing good for him...” He was disappointed over his son’s decision, because his enemies in the Conservative Party automatically assumed that WSC was responsible.

His slim prospects for a cabinet position were diminished accordingly.

In the event, Randolph had no hope of winning. As Brendan Bracken wired to Churchill in late January: “Randolph’s prospects very doubtful. Socialist win probable. More stags than Tories in Cromarty.”

In mid-January, Churchill predicted to his wife that Hitler’s next move would be to occupy the demilitarized Rhineland, in violation of the Versailles Treaty. On 15 January, Japan withdrew from the London Naval Disarmament Conference, refusing to accept any limits on its Navy. WSC wrote to his wife on January 17th: “The Naval Conference has of course collapsed. Japan has ruptured it.... Meanwhile Japan is seeking more provinces of China. Already more than half of their whole budget is spent upon armaments. Those figures I quoted about German expenditure on armaments are being admitted in the press to be only too true. One must consider these two predatory military dictatorship nations, Germany and Japan, as working in accord.”

In early March, the British Government issued a Defence White Paper which Churchill praised. On March 7th, Hitler fulfilled Churchill’s January prediction and sent troops into the Rhineland. The British refused to support France’s request to mobilize against the German actions and to bring Hitler’s violations of the Versailles Treaty to the League of Nations. And, when German foreign minister Ribbentrop said on March 13th that Germany desired to cooperate in a peaceful manner in building a new Europe, Britain’s new foreign secretary, Anthony Eden, issued a note welcoming Germany’s statement—confirming Churchill’s doubtful view of him in December.

On March 14th, Prime Minister Baldwin announced the creation of a new cabinet position, Minister for the Coordination of Defence. To no one’s surprise, including his own, Churchill did not receive the appointment. It went to the distinctly unqualified Attorney-General, Sir Thomas Inskip. The most apt comment on this appointment was by Churchill’s friend Professor Lindemann (in Martin Gilbert’s Winston S. Churchill, volume 5): “The most cynical thing that has been done since Caligula appointed his horse as Consul.”
Amid the endless accounts of noted personalities who crossed paths with Winston Churchill, one of the best-known anecdotes involves his brief encounter with Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City at the turn of the 20th century. In future years Churchill would fondly remember Twain’s “noble air.” The meeting was a bit more contentious and uncomfortable than he later let on. Though they shared the same birthday, November 30th, their experiences over the previous year had much to do with their initial uneasiness with each other.

Churchill, the young war correspondent and sometime soldier, had risen to prominence in 1900, following his daring escape during the Boer War and subsequent election to Parliament on the crest of his fame. In an effort to secure his financial future and bankroll his political career, Churchill toured England that autumn, and then took on a grueling speaking tour of North America that would last into the new year.

Winston’s mother, Lady Randolph Churchill, did her best to introduce him to the right people in America. One, five years before, was her friend Bourke Cockran; now in 1900, Jennie interceded again:

She particularly enjoyed meeting visiting American authors and repeated with glee a story about her friend Mark Twain. At a London gathering he asked Mrs. J. Comyns-Carr, “You are an American, aren’t you?” Mrs. Carr explained that she was of English stock and had been brought up in Italy. “Ah, that’s it,” Twain answered. “It’s your complexity of background that makes you seem American. We are rather a mixture, of course. But I can pay you no higher compliment than to mistake you for a countryman of mine.”

During his travels, the man who would become the quintessential Englishman of the 20th century met his American counterpart from the 19th. While Twain was one of Churchill’s childhood heroes, the meeting would not go as well as the starry-eyed young Briton had hoped. When they met in 1900, their physical differences could not have appeared more stark. Twain, in the waning years of a nearly-five-decade writing career, possessed a universally recognized shock of white hair and was quite possibly the most famous man on the planet. Churchill, just beginning a political career that would last more than sixty years and win him global fame, was much younger, with already thinning hair and a somewhat frail appearance. One report described him as “a very fair man of the purely English type. His face denotes a highly strung temperament and the broad brow considerable mental capacity.” He looked more like an ivory tower professor than a daring escape artist, soldier, front-line war correspondent and newly minted hero of the British Empire. Their differences, though, extended far beyond appearance.

At sixty-five, Twain was enjoying a resurgence of celebrity. He had just returned from a nine-year self-imposed exile in Europe, financially and emotionally fit and secure in his reputation. The only thing that really irritated him was what he saw as the burgeoning empire of the United States. He was embarked on an anti-imperialist crusade that would occupy the last ten years of his life. Nor would the foreign policy of his homeland be the sole focus of his vitriol: he was quite willing to lambaste other imperialist nations as well.

In the weeks leading up to the banquet he declared, “I am a Boxer,” supporting the Chinese in the Boxer Rebellion, and expressed sympathy for South African natives rather than Boers or Englishman embroiled in the war there.

On December 9th, Churchill held a press conference at Everett House, New York City, and Mark Twain himself showed up to ask the questions. Churchill wasted no time in disarming his interlocutor:

Twain: “It has been related that a Dutch maiden fell in love with you and assisted you to flee. You have said that it was the hand of Providence. Which is true?”
Churchill: “It is sometimes the same thing.”
Twain: “How long do you think the war in South Africa will last?”

Churchill: “The war is over now. The Boers are whipped, but do not know it….Gradually, as the conflicting elements become reconciled, a system of autonomous government must be introduced, until at last the colonies become as independent of the British Crown as Canada. The Boer is a splendid fighter and the coolest man under fire I have ever seen. He is what you might call a ‘low-pressure’ fighter. He never gets excited, and as long as he thinks he is going to win he will stay at his post.”

Overwhelmed by the star power of the newly-returned Mark Twain, unfazed by his fierce anti-imperialist rhetoric and probably coaxed by Lady Randolph, the literati of New York invited him to introduce the new hero of the British Empire at his first speech, four days later at the Waldorf Astoria. To some it must have seemed like inviting William Jennings Bryan to introduce William McKinley.

Churchill, just turned twenty-six, was a proud citizen of the most powerful country in the world. He hoped his visit to New York would be as exciting as his first, five years earlier, on the eve of his coverage of the Cuban rebellion against Spain. While he had reason to think that his lectures would be well-received—he’d been a smash across Great Britain and was half-American by birth—he appeared nervous as he waited to give his well-rehearsed speech to the New York audience. Given the events of the past few days, he had cause for worry.

Churchill was aware that he did not have the unanimous support of the committee hosting his appearance. The New York Times had reported that anti-imperialists on the committee openly opposed inviting him. Some, including the mayor of New York and the president of Princeton University, went so far as to request that their names not appear in the program. When Churchill’s tour agent failed to remove their names it caused a stir on the eve of the lecture.

The possibility of a hostile reception must have crossed his mind as he sat on the dais. And yet he was touched by the presence of Twain, whose Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn had enthralled him as a boy:
“You are right to applaud him; he is the most formidable fighting man in the world—one of the heroes of history.”

—WSC disarming pro-Boer audiences who applauded his slide of a Boer commando on his U.S. lecture tour.

Winston replied with becoming humility: “It is my chief duty to thank the chairman for coming here to give my lecture an importance and a dignity which it could not have otherwise obtained.”

While newspapers reported the New York reception as “cordial,” Churchill gamely debated Twain in a private conversation. Biographer William Manchester writes that Churchill “growled” a retort, but Churchill himself did not recall the exchange the same way:

Of course we argued about the war. After some interchanges I found myself beaten back to the citadel “My country right or wrong.” “Ah,” said the old gentleman, “When the poor country is fighting for its life, I agree. But this was not your case.” I think however I did not displease him; for he was good enough at my request to sign every one of the thirty volumes of his works for my benefit; and in the first volume he inscribed the following maxim intended, I daresay, to convey a gentle admonition: “To do good is noble; to teach others to do good is nobler, and no trouble.”

Perhaps when Churchill wrote this thirty years later, he was waxing nostalgic; or perhaps he’d been hardened by years of House of Commons debate. At the time, however, their meeting seems to have been polite at best, with no sign of a deeper bond developing between them. It was the kind of meeting that diplomats like to describe as “a frank exchange of views.”

Churchill’s tour through the U.S. would continue into January 1901. He would describe his audiences as “cool and critical” but also “good natured,” and they listened to him in “quiet tolerance.” He had more cordial receptions in Canada afterward, and returned to England in late winter satisfied with his performances...
and earnings, ready to begin his career as a Member of Parliament. In the meantime, Mark Twain turned his full attention to anti-imperialist polemics.

Perhaps the impact of the meeting on Churchill can best be seen in his swiftly-changing attitudes about the Boer War.WSC’s maiden speech in Parliament, just a few months after his tour, was on British policy in South Africa, in which he advocated a conciliatory approach to the Boers. In 1904, as he contemplated bolting the Conservatives for the Liberal party, he railed against British imperial policy and called the war “a public disaster.”

Had he heard that speech, Twain would likely have led the applause for the now-renegade Conservative.

The two men never met again and last year marked the centenary of Twain’s death. But Churchill did not forget the great novelist. As Martin Gilbert reveals in the official biography, Churchill joined the International Mark Twain Society in 1929, and suggested that Twain’s The Prince and the Pauper be one of the “Great Stories Retold” which he and his secretary, Eddie Marsh, were preparing for the press.

Twain’s work was always in Churchill’s mind. In 1932, when his second appearance on an interrupted lecture tour brought him to Twain’s longtime home of Hartford, Connecticut, WSC declared the city “the centre of the great Mark Twain literature that has flowed out and is still flowing over all the English-speaking peoples around the entire globe.”

In “Everybody’s Language,” a 1935 essay on Charlie Chaplin (FH 142), Churchill wrote of how Chaplin, like himself, had a parent who died young, adding: “Mark Twain, left fatherless at twelve, had substantially the same experience. He would never have written Huckleberry Finn had life been kinder in his youth.”

Nineteen thirty-seven found Churchill proposing Mark Twain among the personages for a sequel to his book of character studies, Great Contemporaries. That same year, the Twain Society’s founder, Cyril Clemens, a descendant of the novelist, presciently wrote Churchill: “Your Marlborough is so magnificent that we feel it deserves the Nobel Prize in Literature.” In due course, Marlborough would play a powerful role in qualifying Churchill for that award.

Finally, on 25 October 1943, Churchill wrote Clemens from Downing Street:

I am writing to express my thanks to the International Mark Twain Society for their Gold Medal, which has been handed to me by Mr. Philip Guedalla. It will serve to keep fresh my memory of a great American, who showed me much kindness when I visited New York as a young man by taking the Chair at my first public lecture and by autographing copies of his works, which still form a valued part of my library.

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Waldorf Astoria Hotel, New York, 13 December 1900:

"I have already written a book about my escape from Pretoria and I trust that everyone in the audience will purchase a copy. This is the anniversary of my escape, many accounts of which have been related here and in England, but none of which is true. I escaped by climbing over the iron paling of my prison while the sentry was lighting his pipe. I passed through the streets of Pretoria unobserved and managed to board a coal train on which I hid among the sacks of coal. When I found the train was not going in the direction I wanted, I jumped off. I wandered about aimlessly for a long time, suffering from hunger, and at last I decided that I must seek aid at all risks. I knocked at the door of a kraal, expecting to find a Boer, and to my joy, found it occupied by an Englishman, who ultimately helped me to reach the British lines."

WHEN THE TWAIN MET...

In truth, both Churchill and Twain had much more in common in their world view than they realized during their brief, awkward encounter. Perhaps if they were both in the twilight of their careers at the time they met, and had enjoyed a talk late into the evening (among the favorite pastimes of both), they might have become friends rather than passing acquaintances.

And that would have been just fine with Mark Twain. At the Pilgrims Society in London, one of the many receptions that marked his final visit to England in 1907, he said: “…praise is well, compliment is well, but affection—that is the last and final and most precious reward that any man can win.”

Winston Churchill would have liked that.  

Endnotes

14. Ibid.
17. Ibid., 398, note 1.
20. Ibid., 776.
21. Ibid., note 1.
"Winston Churchill and the Anglo-American Relationship," 2010

A three-week summer institute for teachers on July 11th-30th, directed by Churchill Centre Academic Chairman James W. Muller, University of Alaska, Anchorage, was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities

Suzanne Sigman
Photographs by Eileen Bach, Genie Burke, Joe Gianetto, Brian Powers, Suzanne Wooten and the Author
Mrs. Sigman is the Churchill Centre’s Educational Programs Coordinator

Twenty-four high school teachers attended The Churchill Centre’s third summer institute funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Professor Muller, TCC Chief Operating Officer Daniel Myers and this writer selected participants from a large number of applications submitted in spring 2010. The Institute was a great success, and teachers returned home with a broadened understanding of Churchill, World War II and the “Special Relationship” that will benefit their teaching, lesson planning and curricula. >>
James Muller’s past experience with the Archives was aided by the endless assistance and courtesy offered by Archives Director Allen Packwood and his staff. Mr. Packwood was truly the lynchpin in our teachers’ research experience. After their training and their work in the files, teachers earned an Archives Centre Reader’s Card, entitling them to return for further research in the future. Joining Muller and Packwood were lecturers including Kevin Theakston, University of Leeds; Richard Overy, University of Exeter; and author, journalist and broadcaster Max Hastings. Addressing the wartime relationship between Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt were David Woolner of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Institute; Piers Brendon, Churchill biographer and former Keeper of the Churchill Archives Centre; and Celia Sandys, Sir Winston Churchill’s granddaughter and a Churchill Centre Trustee. The vast array of site visits included Bletchley Park Cryptology Museum, Sir Winston’s birthplace Blenheim Palace, his country home Chartwell, and his boyhood school Harrow. In London we visited the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Hall, the Cabinet War Rooms and Churchill Museum.

Left: Director Allen Packwood began by offering teachers a personal tour of the massive Churchill Archives Centre, the heart of Churchill research worldwide. Right: Eileen Bach, who teaches in Shanghai, China, developed a PowerPoint presentation on the Churchill Archives Centre, and shared it with participants and organizers on our Google Group site, which began operating in April and will continue indefinitely.

Above: Our first outing was to the Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial in Madingley, outside Cambridge, sited on 30.5 acres donated by Cambridge University. The Cemetery contains the remains of 3812 World War II American military dead; 5127 additional names are recorded on the Tablets of the Missing, where rosettes mark names of those personnel since recovered and identified. Most of them died in the Battle of the Atlantic or in the strategic bombardment of Germany. Right: Bob Faubel and Genie Burke assist our outstanding guide, Arthur Brooks, in lowering the flag at Taps.
Teachers anonymously evaluated their three-week experience on the NEH website, and the following comment was representative: “The Archives sessions were superlative....Allen Packwood’s enthusiasm and knowledge were exceptional. His ability to assist each of us in an incredibly welcoming, engaging and helpful manner allowed participants to navigate through what seemed like a massively overwhelming task: conducting research in the Churchill papers. A fine host as well as a vital part of this program, he made everyone feel useful and gave us the help and encouragement we needed to get started on our research. I loved his initial presentation as well as his colleague’s talk about preserving archives documents. I hope to return and make further use of the archives.”
Below: We enjoyed three meals a day in the Churchill College dining hall. The esteemed historian Richard Overy (third back on the right), joined us for lunch after leading seminar sessions on “Churchill’s Strategy from Rearmament to D-Day” and “Churchill and the Aeroplane: Battle of Britain and Bombing.” Professor Overy teaches history at the University of Exeter, where he also serves as Director of the Centre for the Study of War, State and Society. Right: Despite the busy schedule, there was time to relax on the Churchill College grounds and in the Buttery.

Communications between teachers and organizers began on a Google discussion group in mid-April and will continue indefinitely. Many postings testify to the value of the experience. August 26th: “Hope you are having a good start to the school year. See the August 30th New Yorker for an interesting comparison of American and British views on Churchill.” September 3rd: “Just wanted to let you all know that I did my lesson plan (a seminar on four of Churchill’s post-World War II speeches) today in my Cold War Politics classes. It was awesome to see the work come to life, but much more impressive to see how excited and into the whole thing the kids were. I guess my enthusiasm was infectious. I introduced the seminar and did the background lecture earlier in the week and, ever since, have called my students ‘Young Churchillians’—which they love.”

In summary, as one teacher wrote, “This was an amazing experience. Through the readings, discussions, research, guest lecturers and field trips, I gained new insight into Churchill and World War II. As a teacher, I feel it is important to be a lifelong student. There is a misnomer that history is an unchanging, stagnant subject; new scholarship is always occurring which can and does alter our understanding of the past. It is important that high school teachers are part of this ‘conversation,’ that they have access to the most up-to-date understanding. After all, we are the ones conveying information to the next generation. The Institute was an amazing way for high school teachers to be brought into the academic dialogue, enabling us to bring it back to our classrooms.”

Bletchley Park: Greeted by Sir Winston himself (below), we saw the wonderful collection of Jack Darrah, a lifetime’s work and still growing (with Jim Muller and the author, left), and piled into a vintage call box.
Enjoying the cuisine at our farewell dinner, sponsored by The Churchill Centre at Ciao Bella, near our London accommodations at Goodenough College, Mecklenburgh Square. Teachers left knowing this was not the end, or even the beginning of the end, but perhaps the end of the beginning.

Participants

Eileen Bach, Concordia International School, Shanghai, China • Courtney Beiter, H.B. Plant High School, Tampa, Fla.
Genie Burke, Greenhill School, Addison, Texas • Clarissa Bushman, Stuyvesant High School, New York, N.Y.
Paul Clark, Wausau East High School, Wausau, Wis. • Leanne Dumais, Rickover Naval Academy, Chicago, Ill.
Robert W. Faubel, DeWitt Clinton High School, Bronx, N.Y.
Joseph Gianetto, Maple Avenue Middle School, Saratoga Springs, N.Y.
Jonathan Greiner, Lawrence School, Brookline, Mass. • Troy Hoehne, Aviation High School, Des Moines, Wash.
Catherine J. Holden, Franklin High School, Reisterstown, Md. • Ben Kaplan, Gateway School, New York, N.Y.
James Kravontka, Newington High School, Newington, Conn. • Mera Kriz, North Quincy High School, Quincy, Mass.
Arnold Mansdorf, High School of American Studies, Bronx, N.Y.
Karalyn McGrorty, Mount St. Joseph Academy, Flourtown, Penna.
Elizabeth Montgomery, Cherry Creek High School, Englewood, Colo. • Sara Olds, Summit Academy Jr. High, Draper, Utah
Brian Powers, Willink Middle School, Webster, N.Y. • Maritza A. Salazar, James A. Garfield High School, Los Angeles, Calif.
Kevin Semelsberger, Sunnyslope High School, Phoenix, Ariz. • Robert Simpson, Penncrest High School, Media, Penna.
Lyn Tillet, Christ School, Arden, N.C. • Suzanne Wooten, Deer Valley Middle School, Phoenix, Ariz.
Absent Churchill, India’s 1943 Famine Would Have Been Worse

ARThUR HERMAN

Churchill’s Secret War: The British Empire and the Ravaging of India During World War II, by Madhusree Mukerjee. Basic Books, 368 pp., $28.95, Member price $23.95.

Voltaire said the problem with the Holy Roman Empire was that it was neither holy nor Roman nor an Empire. One could say of Churchill’s Secret War that it is neither secret nor a war, nor has it much to do with Churchill.

Ms. Mukerjee, who writes for Scientific American and is no historian, has gotten herself entangled in three separate and contentious issues: Britain’s battle with Indian nationalists like Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose; Churchill’s often tempestuous views on India; and the 1943-44 Bengal famine. Out of them she attempts to build a plausible cause-and-effect narrative. All she manages is to mangle the facts regarding all three, doing a disservice to both historical and moral truth.

In mid-October 1942 a devastating cyclone ripped through the coastal regions of east Bengal (today lower Bangladesh), killing thousands and decimating the autumn rice crop. Rice that should have been planted was instead consumed. When hot weather arrived in May 1943, the rice crop was a fraction of normal for Bengal’s peasantry, who had spent centuries living near starvation.

Turning bad news into disaster were the Japanese, who had just overrun Burma, the main source of India’s rice imports. Within a month, the entire southeastern subcontinent faced starvation. The governments in New Delhi and Bengal were unprepared, and as the heat grew, people began to die. It was the greatest humanitarian crisis the Raj had faced in more than half a century.

One might blame the disaster on the Japanese, but there were other problems of India’s own making. Many local officials were either absent (Bengal’s governor fell ill and died), distracted by the eruption of Bose’s Quit India movement; or simply too slow and corrupt to react. Bengal’s Muslim majority ministry did nothing, while many of its Hindu members were making huge profits trading in rice during the shortage. Finally, the magnitude of what was happening did not reach the attention of London until it was too late.

No Churchill critic, not even Ms. Mukerjee, has yet found a way to blame Churchill for actually triggering the famine—in the way that, for example, Stalin caused the famine in the Ukraine or Mao the mass starvation during China’s “Great Leap Forward.” Instead, the claim is that Churchill’s callous racist attitudes, developed in 1890s India and typical of the British imperialist elite, blinded him to the suffering and led him to make decisions that prolonged and aggravated the death toll. This included deliberately halting shipments of food that might have relieved the suffering, while insisting that food exports from India to Britain continue despite a famine that by mid-October 1943 was killing 2000 a month in Calcutta.

Today, of course, no accusation against a statesman carries more gravity than that of racism. But Churchill’s position in 1943 needs to be appreciated before we begin accusing him—as Mukerjee does—of war crimes.

During that crucial summer, the Anglo-Americans had just managed to prevail in the U-boat war, although neither Churchill nor Roosevelt yet knew how decisively. (See pages 24-26.) Germany had suffered a decisive setback at Kursk on the Eastern Front, Japan at Guadalcanal, but both remained deadly opponents. Japan was still poised on the border of India, where a massive uprising instigated by Gandhi against British rule had just been suppressed. Meanwhile, both America and Britain were bracing for their impending landings in Italy.

How likely was it that Churchill would respond to news of the Bengal famine—the seriousness of which was yet unrealized by his India advisers Viceroy Linlithgow and Secretary for India Leo Amery—as anything more than an unwelcome distraction?

Past doubt, Churchill’s feelings toward India at that time were far from charitable. He and British officials had narrowly averted disaster by suppressing the Quit India movement, which had threatened to shut down the country.
even as the Japanese threatened it with invasion. And, like most Englishmen of his generation, Churchill held views on Indians and other non-whites that are very far from our thinking today.

Yet Mukherjee’s evidence of Churchill’s intransigence on India stems mainly from Leo Amery’s diary, where he recorded every one of the Prime Minister’s furious outbursts whenever Amery brought up the famine in the War Cabinet—whether Churchill meant what he said or not.

Amery privately decided that on India, “Winston is not quite sane,” and recorded in August 1944 Churchill’s remark that relief would do no good because Indians “breed like rabbits” and would outstrip any available food supply. “Naturally I lost patience,” Amery records, “and couldn’t help telling him that I didn’t see much difference between his outlook and Hitler’s, which annoyed him no little.”

This invidious comparison of Churchill with Hitler is the thematic hinge of the book. Unfortunately for the author, the actual record contradicts her account at almost every point.

When the War Cabinet became fully aware of the extent of the famine, on 24 September 1943, it agreed to send 200,000 tons of grain to India by areas where it was plentiful to where it was not, and begged Churchill to send what help he could. On 14 February 1944 Churchill called an emergency meeting of the War Cabinet to see if they would send more aid without wrecking plans for the coming Normandy invasion. “I will certainly help you all I can,” Churchill telegraphed Wavell on the 14th, “but you must not ask the impossible.”

The next day Churchill wired Wavell: “We have given a great deal of thought to your difficulties, but we simply cannot find the shipping.”

Amery told the viceroy that Churchill “was not unsympathetic” to the terrible situation, but that no one had ships to spare with military operations in the offing. On April 28th Churchill spearheaded an appeal to Roosevelt and the Americans, but they too proved resistant to humanitarian appeals with the invasion of Europe pending.

Another irony: the 1943 harvest was one of the largest in India’s history. Claims of starvation and civil unrest seemed far-fetched in London, as they did in Washington. And Wavell thanked Churchill for “your generous assistance” in getting Australia to send 350,000 tons of wheat to India—although still short of the 600,000 thought necessary.

These ironies are lost on Ms. Mukherjee. If Churchill had truly intended to maintain the Raj in India by undermining nationalists like Gandhi and Bose, he could have done no better than to divert vital resources. But Churchill’s attention was focused on winning the war. Amery admitted as much in a note to Wavell after D-Day: “Winston, in his position, will naturally run any risk rather than one which immediately affects the great military stakes to which we are committed.”

Churchill could be ruthless in pursuing his main objective, as citizens of Dresden, Hamburg, Berlin and other German cities learned. But no imperialist or racist motives can be imputed here.

Of all those who ignored the Bengal famine, the most curious case is Ms. Mukherjee’s hero, Mohandas Gandhi. For all his reputation as a humanitarian, Gandhi did remarkably little about the emergency. The issue barely comes up in his letters, except as another grievance against the Raj—which, in peacetime, had always handled famines with efficiency.

In February 1944 Gandhi wrote Wavell: “I know that millions outside are starving for want of food. But I should feel utterly helpless if I went out and missed the food [i.e. independence] by which alone living becomes worthwhile.”

Gandhi felt free to conduct his private “fast unto death” in order to force the British out, even as the rest of India starved, because he felt he was playing for far bigger stakes. As was Winston Churchill.

"AI" Returns in Leather

RICHARD M. LANGWORTH


The Easton Press is known for its leatherbound editions of classic books—albeit not the greatest leather. They favor a stiff, highly varnished grade of pigskin, although they nicely trim their books with moire endpapers, silk page markers and gilt page edges. >>
“At” RETURNS...

Easton rendered a great service by reprinting three important multi-volume Churchill works. After Finest Hour expressed disappointment with their 1989 version of The Second World War (which did not use the definitive text), they consulted us over The World Crisis and A History of the English-Speaking Peoples (1991-92) offprinting from first editions and including full-color reprints of fold-out maps. Then in 2000, they reissued the Definitive Edition of Churchill’s 1952 collected War Speeches—which, like their World Crisis, cost far less than first editions, making the books particularly attractive to scholars and libraries.

We were not involved in Easton’s reprint of Churchill’s first book (Cohen A1), but unlike their recent reprint of My African Journey (see page 55), it is not an offprint of the Collected Works edition, edited by the late Fred Woods. It does include Woods’s redrawn maps, and all of his footnotes—more than in Churchill’s original, although all of WSC’s are included. But it lacks subject synopses following chapter heads, which appear in every previous Malakand.

For the 1974 Collected Works, Woods redrew many maps, eliminating some of the original fold-outs and changing certain map locations. Text editing varied, but he was particularly zealous with The River War. Names of places were modernized, and there were other textual revisions. One review commended Woods, saying that Churchill “took little care” over his maps. Scholars and bibliophiles thought otherwise.

Tracking text sources for each volume of Collected Works for my Connoisseur’s Guide in 1998, I found that the Malakand was based on the 1899 Silver Library text—a good choice. This was the first edition in which Churchill had the opportunity to correct the errors of his uncle Moreton Frewen (aka “Mortal Ruin”), who edited the 1898 original. Nevertheless, Woods did alter such words as “Karachi,” which Churchill spelled “Kurrâchee.”

On this volume it seems clear that Easton reset Woods’s text, omitted the chapter synopses and renumbered Woods’s footnotes sequentially. Woods (and Easton) also omitted Churchill’s important second edition preface. But there is no way to tell, short of a page-by-page comparison, how true to the Silver Library edition the text remains.

More could have been done. The recent and forthcoming ISI editions of Thoughts and Adventures and Great Contemporaries, edited by James Muller and Paul Courtenay (FH 143: 44-45) are models of what a modern edition should be. While Churchill’s text is left in its original form, erudite new introductions and profuse footnotes provide any needed corrections and tell us what happened to people, places and things over the years since the first edition.

The Malakand has had a new life of late with its relevant reflections on warfare in that part of the world. (See “Coalition with Primitives 2010,” FH 147: 22-23). But Easton provides no special introduction, although a loose sheet describes the book with no reference to modern parallels.

Presuming Easton’s text is essentially Woods’s, this is nothing more than a nicely bound version of the Collected Works edition. And, since this same text was offprinted by Leo Cooper, W. W. Norton, Barnes & Noble and others, you don’t have to spend $79 to own one. Just dial up www.bookfinder.com to browse among offerings priced as low as $8.41. Still, if you wish to own the definitive text, consider acquiring a reading copy of the 1901 Silver Library or 1916 Shilling Library editions.

LEADING CHURCHILL MYTHS #20:

"Churchill Offered Peace and Security to Mussolini"

PATRIZIO ROMANO GIANGRECO


For years conspiracy theorists have cited letters between Churchill and Benito Mussolini, in which Churchill makes various proposals for peace, and even offers to safeguard the “Duce of Fascism” from reprisals in the last days of World War II. They date from just before Italy joined the war to just before Mussolini, who had become head of Hitler’s puppet Italian Social Republic, and his mistress Clara Petacci, were captured and executed by partisans in April 1945.

A Petacci nephew in Arizona has added to the stew by publishing what he says are her diaries. His introduction offers yet another twist: Petacci, it claims, was actually a British spy whose mission was to steal the Churchill letters to protect the Prime Minister.

Il carteggio Churchill-Mussolini doesn’t even bother to illustrate the subject letters, and is so poorly written and documented that it is scarcely credible. But it does present an opportunity to recap the whole sordid story.

The title refers to the first appearance of the “letters” in 1954, when editor Giovanni Guareschi published them in his magazine Candido. Mr. Guareschi also published alleged 1944 letters by Alcide De Gasperi (postwar

Mr. Giangreco is a Naples engineer whose assistance to FH dates back to issue #100, when he obtained in translation Luigi Barzini’s marvelous article on Churchill in the 1910 Dundee election. The author thanks Professor Andrew Martin Garvey of the Italian Army Officers’ College and the University of Turin, for his helpful suggestions and advice in preparing this review.
head of the Italian government), asking the Allies to bomb Rome in order to accelerate German withdrawal from Italy. After a great outcry, they were declared forgeries by an Italian court, which sentenced Guareschi to prison for defamation of a head of government.

The Churchill-Mussolini “letters” played only a minor part in the Guareschi trial, but that hasn’t stopped them from being “revealed” by several books since. Giuliani-Balestrino maintains that they are as genuine as the supposed De Gasperi letters. He is not alone. Renzo De Felice, official historian of Fascism and biographer of Mussolini, also claimed that he had firm proof of validity; unfortunately De Felice died in 1996, his evidence unpublished.

According to Il carteggio Churchill-Mussolini, Il Duce was captured with a cache of documents including Churchill’s “letters.” The plot thickens with a certain “Captain John” (no surname given) whom Churchill allegedly sent to recover the file, who supposedly ordered Mussolini’s execution. Italian historians have labelled this version of Mussolini’s execution la pista inglese (the English trail).

In September 1945, Giuliani-Balestrino tells us, Churchill himself got involved: He traveled to Villa Aprexin on Lake Como, in an area once controlled by Mussolini’s rump republic. A photograph of Churchill during his stay was published, we are told, on page 210 of R.G. Grant’s Churchill: An Illustrated Biography.

Churchill’s visit was ostensibly a painting holiday, but its real purpose, Giuliani-Balestrino states, was to retrieve the incriminating Mussolini file containing his embarrassing overtures to the Duce. (With so many people determined to steal the file, it’s a wonder that none of them succeeded.)

The only problem with all this is that Churchill’s villa, where he stayed as a guest of Field Marshal Alexander from 2 to 19 September, was La Rosa, and the photograph of him painting nearby is the one in Grant’s book.

WSC left La Rosa on the 19th for the Villa Pirelli near Genoa, where he was met by Col. Wathen, commander of the Genoa Sub-Area (Giuliani-Balestrino says WSC was traveling incognito under the name of Col. “Waltham.”). A few days later, Churchill went to Monte Carlo, and then to a villa at Antibes on the French Riviera, lent to him by Eisenhower. Martin Gilbert’s Volume VIII describes WSC’s travels in detail on pages 134-51.

Giuliani-Balestrino doesn’t bother to show us the alleged letters, so let us turn to the most persuasive of the conspiracy theorists, Arrigo Petacco, who illustrates them in his Dear Benito—Caro Winston (Milan 1985): salutations not found in the “letters” themselves.

Ignore the stilted English, and that nobody knows the provenance, and that no technical analysis of paper or signatures was conducted. Just reading them destroys their credibility.

22 April 1940: This letter is from Chartwell, which was shut during the war—not that a home address would be used in a State communication. Also, Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty on 22 April, was unlikely to be responding to propositions from a foreign head of government. The “proposals” it says the Privy Council (not War Cabinet?) “broadly accepted” are unstated. The signature looks blotchy and uneven, as if reproduced and pasted in place; two words are misspelled; two paragraphs begin with lowercase letters; and the type is not the large font used in Churchill’s official letters.

15 May 1940: Some of the words (but not WSC’s words of determination) are actually those Churchill did write (on May 16th according to his memoirs). But Prime Ministers wrote on Downing Street not OHMS stationery, and would not likely have used the grandiose title “Duce of Fascism.”

31 March 1945: The third letter finally gets the notepaper right, but one can hardly imagine Churchill writing in such sugary and soothing tones to a man he had repeatedly vilified since 1940—even assuming Mussolini was in a position to make “suggestions.” Again, the signature is suspect, another word is misspelled, and the large type font is absent. And why, on a letterhead reading “Whitehall,” would the sender add the word “London”?

continued on page 57...
"Uganda Is Defended by Its Insects": Churchill’s African Travelogue

RONALD I. COHEN

Mr. Cohen (ron@chartwellcomm.com) is author of the Bibliography of the Writings of Sir Winston Churchill, 3 vols. (Continuum, 2006) and a longtime Finest Hour contributor. Photographs from the author’s collection. Numbers are from the Cohen Bibliography.

Above: Hodder & Stoughton the first English edition (Cohen A27.1, left) but only 903 of the paper wraps Colonial edition (A27.3, right): the rarest form of MAJ and one of the scarcest in the entire Churchill canon. The cover was a woodcut of WSC with his white rhinoceros.

Left: The striking Hodder & Stoughton Sixpenny Novels edition (A27.8), March 1910, reset in two columns, with its artistic front cover: 20,009 copies were printed for domestic and export use.

Right: Preceding all volume editions were serialisations in the British (C228a) and American (C228b) Strand Magazine, beginning in the March and April 1908 issues respectively.
In December 1905, Prime Minister Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman appointed Winston Churchill Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies. A year and a half later, on 5 June 1907, Churchill proposed visiting British East Africa. His superior, Colonial Secretary Lord Elgin, wrote: “…if it is convenient & appeals to you to undertake that expedition, it will I am sure be of the greatest advantage that you should have seen the country—where we have so many difficult problems to deal with.” Elgin added that he hoped “it will be a pleasant as well as an interesting trip.”

Plans advanced and Lady Randolph wrote Winston on August 22nd that she “hate[d] to think of your going off for so long—and that I shall not see you again before your departure.” Winston’s soon-to-be sister-in-law, Lady Gwendeline Berrie (“Goonie”), wrote him several letters before his departure, including one in which she expressed the hope he would not be visiting Uganda: “It is a country of fevers, man killing country, full of pestilentious insects and poisonous marshes...” He did plan to go there and, in a very unusual inscription in a copy of My African Journey, he later wrote: “Uganda is defended by its insects. p. 94”—and on page 94 of the first edition we read these same words, followed by a typically Churchillian passage:

The dreaded Spirillum tick has begun to infest the roads like a tiny footpad, and scarcely any precautions avail with certainty against him….When he bites an infected person he does not contract the Spirillum fever himself, nor does he transmit it directly to other persons. By a peculiarly malevolent provision of nature this power is exercised not by him but by his descendants, who are numbered in hundreds. So the poison spreads in an incalculable progression. Although this fever is not fatal, it is exceptionally painful in its course and distressing in its consequences.

Churchill set out on September 10th, passing through France, Italy, Austria, Malta, Cyprus and Aden before arriving in Mombasa in early November. Already a much-in-demand author, he had begun his negotiations (with The Strand Magazine) for the publication of a series of articles and photographs on his East African trip before departing, although it was only after he arrived there that those negotiations were concluded. As originally contemplated, Churchill was to be paid £150 per article for a five-part serialisation in The Strand plus £30 for the photographs.

On November 17th Churchill wrote his brother Jack: “I have received a fine offer from the Strand Magazine for five articles for £750, which I propose to accept, as it will definitely liquidate all possible expenses in this journey. There will be another £500 in book form.”

The excitement of Churchill’s travels can only be appreciated from the text of the work, which he described as “a continuous narrative of the lighter side of what was to me a very delightful and inspiring journey.” By the 27th of December, however, our author was back on the Nile, and 3 January 1908 found him relaxing in Cairo. Only ten days later Churchill stopped at the elegant Hotel Bristol in Paris, and was dining with his brother at the Ritz Hotel in London on the 17th. >>

Churchill's wry tribute to Uganda's wildlife on an inscribed copy.

**AFRICAN TRAVELOGUE...**

Churchill earned considerably more from his articles than had been anticipated. His agent of the day, Alexander Pollock Watt, succeeded in convincing Greenough Smith, editor of The Strand Magazine, to pay an additional £150 each for two more articles. Ultimately, nine were published, and Churchill was paid a total of £1050 for what had been contracted as “35,000 words of matter divided into eight articles.” The first part was published in the March 1908 issue of the British Strand, priced at 6d., and in the April 1908 issue of the American Strand, priced at 15¢.

The book rights to My African Journey were not shopped around to the publishing trade in the way Lord Randolph Churchill had been. In fact, the publisher of The Strand Magazine had a loose first-refusal arrangement with Hodder & Stoughton, which agreed to an important Churchillian condition, namely, that “the whole of the amount of the advance is paid to you on the delivery of the ‘copy,’ as you wish it.” The publisher did, however, require that Churchill provide an additional 10,000 words to differentiate the book from the magazine serialisation. In the end, the volume was published in December 1908, a month later than Hodder & Stoughton had hoped, but timed with the appearance of the last monthly installment in the British Strand. While the Hodder & Stoughton archives have not yielded a copy of the publishing contract, it is clear that Churchill secured an advance of close to £1000 for the volume rights.

Hodder & Stoughton printed 12,500 copies, of which 8161 were sold or distributed gratis. The front cover was an artist’s rendition of WSC standing over the white rhino he had bagged. The print run included 1976 Colonial cloth copies, which are distinguished only by the presence of an “asterisk” below the publisher’s name on the spine. Among these was the Canadian issue by William Briggs, which I estimate speculatively as being about 250 copies. It was worth noting that technically, Briggs was not the Canadian publisher: that was the Methodist Book and Publishing House, of which Briggs was the Steward. But it was undeniably Briggs’s name that appeared on the title page and spine.

There were also 903 copies of the fragile card wrappers Colonial issue. This is without doubt the rarest edition/issue of My African Journey and one of the very rarest of all volumes in the Churchill canon, much scarcer in my experience than The People’s Rights (Cohen A31), For Free Trade (Cohen A18) or even the second edition of Mr. Brodrick’s Army (Cohen A10.2). As would be expected, it is distinguished by the presence of the asterisk below the publisher’s imprint on the spine.

Of the first run of Hodder & Stoughton sheets, 1400 copies were shipped to the United States, where the publisher was the Canadian-trained George H. Doran, whose offices were in a publisher-dominated building on West 32nd Street in New York City (where Appleton, Henry Holt and the Oxford University Press were also located). The American publication date was 27 February 1909.

There were three separate sub-issues of the American issue, distinguished only by the title pages. The binding was, in each case, a uniformly uninteresting dark reddish-brown embossed calico-texture cloth. I have discovered no information that would enable me to allocate quantities among these three issues.

Collectors always set great store by dust jackets, and the assumption in the absence of evidence is that most books had them, even in those years. But I have never seen or heard mention of a jacket for My African Journey. It may be that the illustrated top board was in lieu
of a jacket, at least on the English first edition.

In my view the most attractive edition of *My African Journey* was Hodder & Stoughton’s March 1910 publication of the work in its Sixpenny Novels list. Reset in two columns, the front cover of this extremely fragile edition is striking. Of the 20,009 copies printed, 16,365 had been sold domestically and 3644 shipped for export by the end of the company’s 1916-17 fiscal year. I am unaware of any feature distinguishing export from domestic copies. While the newsprint-quality paper and thin wrappers (0.18 mm, half the thickness of the 0.36 mm Colonial card wrappers) rendered these copies much more perishable than the card-wrappers, more than twenty times as many were printed and—as would be expected—many more of the 1910 “paperback” survived. They remain uncommon and quite scarce in near-perfect condition.

It was more than half a century before *My African Journey* was again publicly available. In November 1962, Neville Spearman and the Holland Press republished it in London, and then on Churchill’s 80th birthday, Icon Books published the first modern paperback edition of the work. Heron Books then republished the volume in Geneva, possibly in 1965. Additional appearances over the next twenty-five years were the New English Library (London, 1972); Leo Cooper (London, 1989); Norton (New York, 1990); Mandarin Books (paperback, London, 1990); and, last of all, Easton Press (leatherbound, Norwalk, Connecticut, 1992).

*My African Journey* is unique among Churchill works: his only travel book, probably the most colorfully bound among first editions, and a text that offers a glimpse of East Africa as young Winston saw it.

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**Print Runs**

A27.1-7 First edition, only printing (1908). Total print run, 12,500, distributed as follows:
- UK cased (cloth-bound): 8,161
- Colonial cased: 1,726
- Canadian cased: 250 (estimate)
- Colonial card-wrapped: 903
- USA cased (3 states): 1,400
- Unaccounted for: 60

A27.8 Second (paper wrappers) edition, only printing (1910). Total run: 20,009.

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**MYTHS, from page 53...**

Petacco’s only published Mussolini letter, 18 May 1940, is a handwritten draft of the words in his official letter to Churchill, who dated it the 16th, possibly in error, in *Their Finest Hour*.

Serious Italian historians and courts concluded long ago that the Churchill “letters” to Mussolini are transparent frauds. Churchill admitted in *Their Finest Hour* that he had once expressed admiration for the Duce, whom he first considered a bulwark against Bolshevism. Obviously, however, the admiration came to an end when Mussolini allied Italy with Nazi Germany. The Prime Minister who would have “no truce or parley” with Hitler and his “grizzly gang” would never have parleyed with the man he referred to as Hitler’s “Italian jackal.”

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**WHAT CHURCHILL REALLY WROTE:**

Prime Minister to Signor Mussolini 16.V.40

Now that I have taken up my office as Prime Minister and Minister of Defence I look back to our meetings in Rome and feel a desire to speak words of goodwill to you as Chief of the Italian nation across what seems to be a swiftly-widening gulf. Is it too late to stop a river of blood from flowing between the British and Italian peoples? We can no doubt inflict grievous injuries upon one another and maul each other cruelly, and darken the Mediterranean with our strife. If you so decree, it must be so; but I declare that I have never been the enemy of Italian greatness, nor ever at heart the foe of the Italian lawgiver. It is idle to predict the course of the great battles now raging in Europe, but I am sure that whatever may happen on the Continent England will go on to the end, even quite alone, as we have done before, and I believe with some assurance that we shall be aided in increasing measure by the United States, and, indeed, by all the Americas.

“I beg you to believe that it is in no spirit of weakness or of fear that I make this solemn appeal, which will remain on record. Down the ages above all other calls comes the cry that the joint heirs of Latin and Christian civilisation must not be ranged against one another in mortal strife. Hearken to it, I beseech you in all honour and respect, before the dread signal is given. It will never be given by us.”

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**SPINE IMPRINTS:** The First English edition (and all three American sub-issues) carried Hodder & Stoughton imprints, above left; copies for the export market were designated by an asterisk (A27.2 cased, above right, A27.3 card wrapper version, below left); the Briggs Canadian issue (A27.7) carried its own imprint.

**Print Runs**

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- Unaccounted for: 60

A27.8 Second (paper wrappers) edition, only printing (1910). Total run: 20,009.
The Least of the Lot—by a Long Way

DAVID FREEMAN

His Finest Hour: A Biography of Winston Churchill, by Christopher Catherwood. New York: Skyhorse; London: Robinson, hardbound, 272 pp., $22.95, Member price $18.35.

The turn of the century brought in a flood of mostly respectable, brief biographical studies of Churchill which crested in 2005 with Paul Addison’s Churchill: The Unexpected Hero, a book rightly described in these pages by the late John Ramsden as the best of the lot “and by a long way.” That judgment remains secure as the ebb tide now brings in the detritus that is His Finest Hour: a book that must be regarded as the least of the lot—by a long way.

Already the author of two meretricious monographs about aspects of Churchill’s career, Catherwood does not take animadversions well, opining in the final chapter of his latest book that “a biographer who tries to steer a middle, balanced course gets attacked from both sides” (228). Before remonstrating, he should have taken the time to check his facts. It takes neither a Churchill admirer nor a critic to find that his book recycles far too many myths and misconceptions long ago set straight by more level-headed historians.

For openers, the chapter dealing with Churchill’s youth features generous use of words like “possibly” and “perhaps,” while resting heavily on the dubious, shop-worn suppositions of Anthony Storr and Lord Moran that Churchill was an alcohol-dependent manic depressive.

Lady Soames once addressed Storr’s pretentious pronouncement of her father’s malady as a remarkable diagnosis from someone who never knew him. Lord Moran knew him—very well indeed—but usually when he was ill. Moran’s “diaries” (Churchill: The Struggle for Survival, 1965) departed significantly from the material he actually wrote in his diary at the time. Relying on such sources contributes to Catherwood’s catalog of conjecture, which itself merely precedes a series of gross factual errors.

Catherwood’s understanding of issues like Imperial Preference and the Ten-Year Rule is seriously flawed, while his accounts of episodes such as Sidney Street, Tonypandy and Irish independence are just dead wrong. Incidentally, Martin Gilbert’s “The Golden Eggs” (pages 20-27) does a nice job of sinking Catherwood’s fatuous theories about WSC’s decisionmaking in World War II. The full list of errors runs too long to be cited here, and would bore our readers, who have been over the same ground repeatedly in the past.

There can be no excuse for this kind of professional ineptitude in an age when facts can be easily verified by Internet research as well as traditional print sources. For example, a brief visit to the “Leading Churchill Myths” on www.winstonchurchill.org, or a reading of Martin Gilbert’s 1991 biography, Churchill: A Life, could have forestalled most of the errors Catherwood commits. Faced with such sloppy scholarship, the potential reader is well advised to turn instead to the vastly superior studies led by Paul Addison, Geoffrey Best, John Keegan and Ian Wood. This is one Finest Hour that isn’t.

Smolensk: A World War II Climacteric

PUBLISHER’S NOTE

Smolensk 10 July-10 September 1941, Vol. 1, by David M. Glantz. Helion Publishers, 656 pp., illus., $59.95. Member price $47.95.

At dawn on 10 July 1941, massed tanks and motorized infantry of German Army Group Center’s Second and Third Panzer Groups crossed the Dnieper and Western Daugava Rivers. Since June 22nd, when Hitler unleashed Operation Barbarossa, his invasion of the Soviet Union, the Wehrmacht had advanced up to 500 kilometers into Russia, killed or captured up to one million Red Army soldiers, and reached the two rivers. This satisfied Hitler’s assumption that Germany would emerge victorious if it could defeat and destroy the bulk of the Red Army before it withdrew to safety behind the Daugava and Dnieper. With the Red Army shattered, Hitler and most Germans expected total victory in a matter of weeks.

The ensuing battles in the Smolensk region frustrated German hopes for quick victory. Despite destroying two Soviet armies and encircling the remnants near Smolensk, they were soon faced by seven newly-mobilized Soviet armies. Smolensk ultimately became the crucial turning point in Operation Barbarossa.

This is the most thorough description of Smolensk ever assembled; a second volume is coming in 2011.
While writing my book, *Winston Churchill’s Imagination*, what surprised me most was his affinity with science fiction. He mentions works by Jules Verne, George Chesney, Karel Čapek and Olaf Stapledon. He enthusiastically praised the science fiction (though not the politics) of H.G. Wells. Churchill’s 1930 essay, “If Lee Had Not Won the Battle of Gettysburg,” is an outstanding early example of alternative history, now a very popular form recognized as a major branch of science fiction.

Alternative history revises the past. In the world postulated by Churchill’s essay, Lee *does* win at Gettysburg and the Confederacy achieves independence, frees its slaves, and coexists alongside the United States.

Churchill’s narrator speculates on what might have happened if the Confederates had lost. He suggests that instead of the enduring European peace achieved (however implausibly from our viewpoint) as a consequence of Union defeat in the Civil War, there might have been a world war early in the 20th century.

Triumphant Confederacies became a minor staple of science fiction, although most such works show no good coming from a Southern victory, e.g., Ward Moore’s 1955 classic, *Bring the Jubilee*. It is a virtue of Churchill’s story that, going against this strain, “If Lee Had Not Won the Battle of Gettysburg” invites readers to make a more difficult leap from their preconceptions.

It is shocking enough to provoke reconsideration of the moral issues at stake in the American Civil War. More importantly, however, Churchill dramatizes and invites acceptance of the idea that there was nothing inevitable about that war’s outcome, or perhaps about most of what we now take for granted as settled history.

One of Churchill’s great themes, as conspicuous in “Shall We All Commit Suicide?” as in “Fifty Years Hence,” is the contingency of human events. Alternative history is called “counterfactual history” by historians. Some regard it as a thought experiment, indispensable in exploring chains of causation, but others warn against it as fallacious reasoning. >>

Dr. Alkon, a Churchill Centre Academic Adviser, is Leo S. Bing Professor Emeritus of English and American Literature at the University of Southern California. He has published books on Samuel Johnson, Daniel Defoe, science fiction, and *Winston Churchill’s Imagination* (2006). He won our 2003 Somervell Prize for his Lawrence of Arabia features in *Finest Hour* 119.
As a writer, Churchill often includes within historical narratives brief counterfactual passages—miniature alternative histories. They are a major feature of his method as an historian. As a reader, Churchill liked stories that portray possible futures rather than imaginary pasts. He judged science fiction by its accuracy as prediction. Accordingly, he preferred Wells to Verne on the grounds that Wells is in tune with 20th century trends, even though he (like Churchill) got started as a writer late in the Victorian fin de siècle milieu: “Jules Verne delighted the Victorians. He told them about all the things they hoped they would be able to do. He showed them the possibilities of science applied to the 19th century. Wells took up his work in the 20th, carried it much further in a far more complex scene—and Wells saw the bloody accomplished fact, illustrating his pages while their ink was wet.”

Thus, for Churchill, the convergence of reality with fiction, of the actual future with a fictional forecast, was a hallmark of the best science fiction.

But “Shall We All Commit Suicide?” and “Fifty Years Hence” are not science fiction. They are essays in prediction—attempts at what we might now call futurology, without stories or imaginary characters as vehicles for their views of possible futures. What these two essays most significantly share with science fiction is that both stress the contingency of what lies ahead. They show that different possibilities exist, many already available to present-day imagination. They imply that there is no single inevitable future.

We must now choose—or somehow avoid—wars and weapons that may destroy the human race in ways outlined in “Shall We All Commit Suicide?” We may embark on a road to the utopian future sketched in “Fifty Years Hence.” Or we may take a road to the nightmare vision of a world without moral guidelines, with genetically engineered robots whose thoughts as well as physiology and actions are controlled by the State. That would be another way of rendering humans extinct even worse than being blown to oblivion by atom bombs.

In a very science fictional image, Churchill suggests that such dehumanization is a fate “from which a fortunate collision with some wandering star, reducing the earth to incandescent gas, might be a merciful deliverance.”

Yet Churchill also makes clear that merely preserving the human race as we now know it is perhaps equally unsatisfactory: “Under sufficient stress—starvation, terror, warlike passion, or even cold intellectual frenzy, the modern man we know so well will do the most terrible deeds, and his modern woman will back him up” (294). Events since this was written in 1931 have done nothing to diminish its accuracy or relevance.

Churchill’s dystopia of dehumanizing thought-control in “Fifty Years Hence” partly anticipates George Orwell’s 1984. This novel dramatizes, among other things, the replacement of humans by mindless creatures of the State. Orwell’s working title was The Last Man in Europe.

Orwell named his protagonist Winston Smith, in tribute to Churchill. As Smith is being brainwashed in 1984’s terrifying prison scenes, his interrogator O’Brien asks, “Do you consider yourself a man?” When Smith says “Yes,” O’Brien replies, “If you are a man, Winston, you are the last man. Your kind is extinct; we are the inheritors.”

Churchill’s vision of genetic engineering even more closely anticipates Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World, published in early 1932, shortly after “Fifty Years Hence” appeared in the December 1931 Strand Magazine. Inspired mainly by Karel Čapek’s play Rossum’s Universal Robots, Churchill arrived independently as well as slightly ahead of Huxley at the same core idea of people biologically and psychologically conditioned by their government in ways that eliminate human freedom and even what is commonly taken to be human nature.

Churchill treats the idea concisely and somberly. Huxley’s longer work is a comic tour de force that points an equally somber moral. Brave New World has achieved enduring fame, thanks to its hilariously effective satire as well as the ever-increasing relevance its warning shares
"What is most original and, I believe, most relevant now in ‘Fifty Years Hence’ is Churchill’s insistence that we can no longer take the past as a guide to the future. The accelerated pace of change induced by the rapid progress of science, he explains, has created an unprecedented discontinuity in human history.”

with that in Churchill’s “Fifty Years Hence.” In science fiction, Churchill is very far from the equal of Orwell and Huxley. Nevertheless Churchill was alert to the social, intellectual, and artistic currents that prompted their masterpieces, and well able to try his hand to good effect at related forms of writing.

What is most original and, I believe, most relevant now in “Fifty Years Hence” is Churchill’s insistence that we can no longer take the past as a guide to the future. The accelerated pace of change induced by the rapid progress of science, he explains, has created an unprecedented discontinuity in human history. Therefore, attempts at prediction as a basis for current decisions must adopt the scientific method of extrapolation, and discard the historian’s quest for past patterns and cycles of events that may be expected to recur with only slight variations:

There are two processes which we adopt, consciously or unconsciously when we try to prophesy. We can seek a period in the past whose conditions resemble as closely as possible those of our day, and presume that the sequel to that period will, save for minor alterations, be repeated. Secondly, we can survey the general course of development in our immediate past, and endeavour to prolong it into the near future. The first is the method of the historian; the second that of the scientist. Only the second is open to us now, and this only in a partial sphere. (288)

This perceptive insight amounts to a paradox that Churchill wisely made no attempt to resolve. He, after all, was a historian—and a prolific one at that—who believed deeply in the importance of knowing history. He preached what he practiced. “Study history, study history” turns up prominently, and rightly so, on Churchill Centre literature.

Nor was Churchill averse, even in the decade of writing “Fifty Years Hence,” to drawing parallels between the past and the present. In his biography of Marlborough Churchill scatters implied and explicit comparisons between the dangers of Louis XIV’s aggressive regime and the totalitarian threats looming in the 1930s. But in Marlborough, although not putting the matter in the theoretical terms of his comparison between the methods of historians and scientists, Churchill remarks the paradox that history must be studied, even though “the success of a commander does not arise from following rules or models. It consists in an absolutely new comprehension of the dominant facts of the situation at the time, and all the forces at work...every great operation of war is unique.”

And by implication, surely not just operations of war. There can be no mistaking the import or relevance of Churchill’s view of history: know the past but never, never count on it as an exact guide to the present or, especially, the future. Expect the unexpected.

No lesson could be harder.

Endnotes


Churchill Quiz

JAMES 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. In which city on 11 November 1944 did the crowds welcome WSC with cries of “Churchill! Churchill!”? (P)

2. Which book begins: “Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill was born at Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire on 30 November 1874.”? (L)

3. Beaverbrook told Samuel Hoare in 1941: “There Attlee and Greenwood, a sparrow and a jackdaw, are perched on either side of the glittering bird of Paradise.” Who was the bird? (C)

4. In which year did Time proclaim WSC “Man of the Half-Century”? (M)

5. Churchill on 4 July 1918: “When I have seen… the splendour of ______ roads of France and Flanders, I have experienced emotions which I cannot describe.” Supply the missing word. (W)

6. In which speech did Churchill say: “The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this Island or lose the war”? (W)

Level 2

13. When did WSC tell the Commons: “Make your minds perfectly clear that if ever you let loose upon us again a general strike, we will loose upon you—another be the lion who knew the way”? (S)

14. WSC broadcasting on 17 June 1940: “We shall defend our island home and with the British Empire we shall fight on un conquerable until the curse of Hitler is lifted from the brows of mankind.” What event inspired this broadcast? (S)

15. WSC to Captain Cuthbert of HMS Ajax, Christmas Day 1944: “…I come here as a cooing dove of peace, bearing a sprig of mistletoe in my beak…” Where was “here”? (W)

16. Winston cabled his wife in late 1944 about “…haggard Greek faces round the table, and the Archbishop with his enormous hat, making him, I should think, seven feet high.” Who was the Archbishop? (C)

Level 1

17. Why did Churchill cable Roosevelt on 9 March 1941: “Our blessings…go out to you and the American nation for this very present help in time of trouble”? (C)

18. WSC in July 1943 said that we should not “crawl up the leg of Italy like a harvest bug, but strike boldly at the knee.” What did he mean? (W)

19. What was Churchill’s last office in the House of Commons? (M)

20. Give the year for the famous photograph of Winston, in full riding gear, on a horse at a meeting of the Old Surrey and Burstow Foxhounds. (P)

21. In June 1945, whom did Churchill recommend to be awarded the Order of Merit and Freedom of London? (C)

22. When did Churchill tell Ian Jacob: “It would be a pity to have to go out in the middle of such an interesting drama without seeing the end. But it wouldn’t be a bad moment to leave. It is a straight run in now; and even the Cabinet could manage it”? (S)

23. What did Churchill mean when he wrote to his mother on 26 January 1898: “The balance between Imports and Exports must be maintained”? (L)

24. Churchill told Congress on 17 January 1952: “There is a jocular saying: ‘To improve is to change; to be perfect is to have changed often.’” Whose saying did he refer to? (M)

Answers

1. Paris. (2) Randolph S. Churchill’s Youth 1874-1900, first volume of the official Church records volumes was published in 1952. (3) In its 2 January 1950 issue, with WSC on the cover. (4) Churchill’s “rompers” or siren-suits were designed forwarders to wear when a siren warned of an imminent air-raid. (5) American. Churchill at the Battle of Blenheim, 13 August 1704. (6) February 1943, leaving Algiers for England in a Liberator, after a day’s delay due to engine trouble. (7) Greece. (8) His father, Lord Randolph Churchill. Winston was to die seventy years later on the same day, January 24th. (9) These suits had been designed for Churchill in 1896 that he was “profoundly impressed with the vigor of your language, and the breadth of your views… I conceived a very high opinion of your future career…”? (P)

10. Why is the Preface in all four of Churchill’s Marlborough volumes dated August 13? (L)

11. Who wrote Churchill in 1896 that he was “profoundly impressed with the vigor of your language, and the breadth of your views… I conceived a very high opinion of your future career…”? (P)

12. After which summit meeting did WSC say: “A small lion was walking between a huge Russian bear and a great American elephant, but it would perhaps be the lion who knew the way”? (S)

14. WSC broadcasting on 17 June 1940: “We shall defend our island home and with the British Empire we shall fight on unconquerable until the curse of Hitler is lifted from the brows of mankind.” What event inspired this broadcast? (S)

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26. In which speech did Churchill say: “The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this Island or lose the war”? (W)

27. Who said of WSC in 1963, “He is the most honored and honorable man to walk the stage of human history in the time in which we live”? (S)

28. Of whom did WSC write, “For a month, at his mother’s house, he lingered pitifully, until very early in the morning of January 24 the numbing fingers of paralysis laid that weary brain to rest”? (P)

29. Why were Churchill’s “rompers” called siren-suits? (M)

30. Why is the Preface in all four of Churchill’s Marlborough volumes dated August 13? (L)

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Alan Turing OBE FRS (1912-1954): He Solved Enigma

As head of Hut 8 at Bletchley Park, cryptanalyst Alan Turing (pronounced “TWER-ing”) wrote the theoretical description of a programmable digital computer before any had been built, and formalized the concept of the algorithm—vital steps toward the modern computer. Turing also developed the electro-mechanical “bombe” that found settings for the German Enigma key (see Martin Gilbert, pages 20-27). Turing was honored by George VI and pronounced a hero by Churchill, but he was treated comprehensively by the postwar British government, which disregarded his wartime contributions, and he died by suicide in 1954, just short of 42. In 2009, Prime Minister Gordon Brown made an official apology on behalf of the British government for the way in which Turing had been treated. Finest Hour honors his memory and his crucial role in winning the war.

About the Artist

Daniel Rogers, who painted both covers this issue, was born in Bletchley, resides in Oxford, and has been painting in oils for twenty years. He is a member of the Alan Turing Year Committee for the 2012 Turing Centenary. His commissions include work for the Bletchley Park Post Office, the Turing Committee, several publications and individuals.

“Young Churchill” Cover Portrait Offered to Finest Hour Readers

The cover painting is offered as a signed print with a certificate of authenticity, at a 15% discount to Finest Hour subscribers. Go to www.printreegallery.com and enter discount code “Finesthour15” in the “redeem” box at the beginning of the payment process. The discount will be automatically deducted from the total. Printree are based at Bletchley and ship internationally. The originals of both cover paintings, and other historical works, are available from the artist’s website http://xrl.us/bh6q6y. For further information contact Mr. Rogers by email: rogersdaniel1@me.com.