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1900–1955

All the Karsh Photos • Canada, America and Britain Today
The “Special Relationship”: Today and Tomorrow

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Readers please note: A number of book reviews, although written, were postponed from this issue for lack of space. For current titles reviewed, contact the editor.
Still Star Quality

*The Daily Telegraph* entitled a piece, “Winston Churchill made history—David Cameron never will.” Leaving aside their article, which is irrelevant to Churchillians, I had to take note that almost fifty years after his death, Churchill is still headline material. This may not be surprising but should be.

Why should Churchill still be star quality after all this time? Yes, we know—but do we often reflect on the why, or consider what his enduring qualities were, and why we see them admired today? With modern problems, don’t ask “what Churchill would do,” as Lady Soames so trenchantly observes. Seek instead the principles he would act on. We may find that he was wrong on occasion, but never dishonorable. That is still a good guide today.

JONATHAN HAYES, CORVALLIS, ORE.

Finest Hour’s New Look

The new layout of *Finest Hour* is great—easy to read even on a treadmill.

DAVID DRUCKMAN, TUCSON, ARIZ.

Many congratulations on 153: it’s not only a fine read but the “new look” is excellent, enticing one to look beyond its cover. To my mind there is no doubting its “kerb appeal” which I am sure will prove a further help in the efforts of our Branch to attract a wider (if I may be so bold, younger?) audience.

NIGEL GUEST, CHMN, CHARTWELL BRANCH, CHURCHILL CENTRE UNITED KINGDOM

Thanks for the excellent articles on timely subjects: currency manipulation and the Gold Standard—fascinating, with a lot of educational bang for the buck. The articles explain and correct many financial terms, like “sterilization,” which I’ve encountered but never understood. They also showed that the economics of world capital flow is so complex that the finest minds, with a lifetime of experience, struggle with it. This kind of activity, though crucial in determining the policy of nations, goes on entirely behind the scenes, unappreciated by the general public. I’m now better prepared to understand these issues.

STEVE GOLDFEIN MD, SAN FRANCISCO

I have a letter from a member saying he just finished Manchester’s *The Last Lion* volume II for the third time, asking if there is a book we could recommend that covers Churchill’s war years, “preferably in the Manchester style and with comprehensive research.”

DAN MYERS, CHURCHILL CENTRE, CHICAGO

• Editor’s response: He might start with the World War II sections of Roy Jenkins’ *Churchill* (which are substantial). Or try Geoffrey Best’s *Churchill and War* and John Lukacs’ *Five Days in London, May 1940*, which contain a lot of the drama of that time. Max Hastings’ *Finest Years: Churchill as Warlord* is also very well written. Please also refer him to the two excerpts of Manchester’s volume III in *Finest Hour*. Finally he should read Barbara Leaming’s *Churchill Defiant* for what happened *after* the war, because she packs a lot of style along with her understanding of the subject.

*FH* 153 was good. I always wanted more on Churchill and the Gold Standard, though I think the articles let the wishes of advisers. One small correction: Lynne Olson said, describing the early war years, that *Life* covers “during that period” (p. 54) influenced America positively towards Britain, and that “another more famous *Life* cover during that period” [was] the famous Karsh
More Richard Burton on Churchill

Anent Lady Williams’ letter (FH 153:5), Robert Hardy mentioned the Burton-Churchill encounter over Hamlet whilst addressing the recent London Churchill conference. He confirmed that “the old man” was the expression Burton used to refer to WSC, and that Churchill came to the dressing room and addressed Burton as “my noble Prince”—although Burton himself remembers Churchill said, “My Lord Hamlet”—before asking if he could use the loo. Having done so, Churchill told Burton his soliloquy was magnificent and that, consequently, he was surprised it took him so long to get to it!

RAFAL HEYDEL-MANKOO, LONDON

A few years later, Richard Burton earned $100,000 for recording Churchill’s own words for the sound track of the television series The Valiant Years, based on Churchill’s World War II memoirs, and was apparently chosen for the part by Churchill himself (“Get that boy from the Old Vic...”), arguably one of the best things he ever did. He managed to convey the inner feel of that gravelly Churchillian voice without actually mimicking it, and he was thereafter much in demand for sound tracks requiring Churchill’s words...much as Robert Hardy would in the next generation.

Even then, Burton was fairly defensive about just what he was doing, claiming that he had based his Churchill voice “slightly on a Peter Sellers imitation...” and “looking for a corner.” Returning to his seat he told his daughter Mary, “I was looking for a loo-loo, and who d’you think I ran into? Juloo.”

Burton’s Churchill Antipathy

Pursuant to the above, and Lady Williams asking our reasons for believing that Burton disliked WSC, from John Ramsden, Man of the Century (London, 2002), 231-33:

In 1953 [Churchill] visited the Old Vic theatre to see Burton play Hamlet, complimenting him on the virility of his characterisation. During the interval he visited Burton in his dressing room (asking “My Lord Hamlet” if he might make use of his lavatory) and then met the cast and shook hands with them on stage after the performance. Burton later recalled the extreme difficulty of performing in front of “this religion, this flag, this insignia,” especially since the great man was sitting near the front of the stalls and muttering “To be or not to be?” and much of the rest of the play along with the eponymous hero.

A few years later, Richard Burton would do the same.

Would the next two decades have been the same had the automobile that hit him killed Winston Churchill in 1931, and the bullet that missed him killed Franklin Roosevelt in 1933? Would Neville Chamberlain or Lord Halifax have rallied Britain in 1940? Would John Garner have produced the New Deal and the Four Freedoms? Suppose in addition that Lenin had died of typhus in Siberia in 1895, and Hitler had been killed on the western front in 1916? Would the 20th century have looked the same? Would the next two decades have been the same had the automobile that hit him killed Winston Churchill in 1931, and the bullet that missed him killed Franklin Roosevelt in 1933? Would Neville Chamberlain or Lord Halifax have rallied Britain in 1940? Would John Garner have produced the New Deal and the Four Freedoms? Suppose in addition that Lenin had died of typhus in Siberia in 1895, and Hitler had been killed on the western front in 1916? Would the 20th century have looked the same? Individuals do make a difference in history.” —Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., 1995
Winston is (Almost) Back
by Elliot S. Berke
WASHINGTON, DECEMBER 19TH— The House of Representatives adopted a resolution, HR 497, calling for the installation of a Churchill bust in the Capitol building. The resolution was adopted on suspension, a legislative technique which limits debate on non-controversial issues but requires either a voice vote (as in this case) or a two-thirds recorded vote. No Senate action was required, since each side of the Capitol chooses its own artwork.

The resolution was sponsored by John Boehner (R-Oh.), a rare act for a Speaker of the House. Mr. Boehner told Finest Hour: “Winston Churchill was the best friend America ever had. I just felt it was time he found permanent residence in the Capitol the way he has found a permanent place in our common history.” In a similar vein, there is a statue of Abraham Lincoln in the London park across from Parliament.

Boehner timed the vote to coincide with the 70th anniversary of Churchill’s first address to Congress (Churchill would go on to address Congress in 1943 and 1952, the record holder for most addresses by a foreign leader). His December 1941 speech, three weeks after Pearl Harbor, had its own climactic: “Now we are the masters of our fate…as long as we have faith in our cause and an unconquerable will-power, salvation will not be denied us.”

The cynical among us will see this as another belated retort to the return of the Epstein Churchill bust, on loan to former President George W. Bush, by President Obama in early 2009. The occasion produced a considerable press frenzy in the United States (see FH 142:7). More recently, the former White House bust made a cameo appearance during the Republican presidential primary season. Governor Mitt Romney, when asked what he would bring to the White House, replied: “Winston Churchill used to have his bust in the Oval Office. And if I’m president of the United States, it’ll be there again.” You can’t keep a good bust down.

—Mr. Berke co-chairs the Political Law Group at McGuire Woods LLP and was formerly counsel to Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the United States House of Representatives.

Cruise Ship Non-Quote
JANUARY 20TH— All over the Internet is a false Churchill quote relating to the recent disaster of the fated cruise ship Costa Concordia. Churchill, cruising the Mediterranean on an Italian liner, is asked why he chose an Italian ship.

“There are three things I like about being on an Italian cruise ship,” Churchill supposedly says. “First, their cuisine is unsurpassed. Second, their service is superb. And then, in time of emergency, there is none of this nonsense about women and children first.”

We had fifty queries about this in the first month after it hit and had a bet we wouldn’t see the last until Easter. Amusing to some, anathema to others, including relatives of the Costa Concordia passengers and many embarrassed Italians, this is NOT by Winston Churchill. Some have attributed it to Noël Coward, but the Quote Investigator (http://bit.ly/xr4GfX) tracks it to travel writer Henry J. Allen in 1917. It did appear in a book of
alleged Churchill quotes which—as invariably is the case when false quotes are published—provides neither authority nor attribution.

What is certain is that Churchill nowhere said this; nothing like it appears in his canon. Churchill’s words to his wife about the Titanic disaster, 100 years ago in April, serve to show how out of character would be his remarks now circulating the Internet:

“The strict observance of the great traditions of the sea towards women and children reflects nothing but honour upon our civilization....I cannot help feeling proud of our race and its traditions as proved by this event. Boat loads of women and children tossing on the sea—safe and sound—and the rest Silence. Honour to their memory.”

Miner’s Friend

ABERAVON, WALES, FEBRUARY 23RD—Collier John Williams met Churchill in the trenches of World War I, and in the late 1920s Churchill helped Williams find a job when he fell on hard times, the BBC revealed tonight. Williams’ grandson Peter recalled:

“My grandfather lost his work in the coal mine. He wrote to Churchill to ask for work….“ Churchill, then touring California, replied, “I am extremely glad that you have obtained a post under the government as a result of my intervention. When I return to England in the middle of November, perhaps you will write again and let me know how you are getting on. Naturally, I would do anything I could, but I have—of course—no influence with the present [Labour] government.”

Churchill may have been out of office, Williams said, but he still had clout. His grandfather found a job in the Ministry of Labour. John Williams was so grateful that he named his son after WSC, calling him Robert Winston Spencer Williams.

Producer Euros Wyn could not resist adding his opinion that all this was very ironic, since, during the 1910 Tonypandy riots, “Churchill sent troops onto the streets to support the police against the miners”—a canard uttered by Richard Burton (see page 63), but repeatedly exploded by historians for the past forty years.

Friend of Miners

LONDON, FEBRUARY 1ST—The descendants of photographer Arthur Knight have offered for auction an allegedly unknown photo of Churchill in South Africa just after his escape from the Boer prison camp at Pretoria. But as military historian Douglas Russell advises us, this is quite an old chestnut, having appeared in R.G. Grant’s Winston Churchill (London: Bison, 1989), 37.

In the photo, WSC is mounted on horseback and surrounded by troops of the South African Light Horse, where he was attached as a war correspondent.

His hair-raising escape story was told in his London to Ladysmith (1900), more fully in his autobiography My Early Life (1930), and with new research in Celia Sandys’s Churchill Wanted Dead or Alive (2000).

Foiled at Teheran?

MOSCOW, JANUARY 10TH—Gevork Vartanian, who claimed to have foiled a German plot to assassinate Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin, died at 87; he was buried in his native Armenia. Vartanian, a Soviet operative from 1940 through the early 1990s, was 19 in autumn 1943, when Hitler approved Operation Long Jump, an assassination plot headed by Ernst Kaltenbrunner. Vartanian’s group of youthful agents, known as the “light cavalry” for their fast deployment (often on bicycles), located six German radio operators in the holy city of Qum, 40 miles south of Teheran, who were communicating with Kaltenbrunner in Berlin. When the six were arrested, the agents allowed one to pass the news to Berlin. According to Vartanian, this made the Germans decide the mission was too compromised to continue.

Finest Hour asked Roosevelt-Churchill scholar Warren Kimball to confirm the story. “The Soviets long claimed that they had foiled such a plot,” he writes. “I recall mentioning the claim in my volumes of Churchill-Roosevelt Correspondence (1984). More details have come out in the last decade or so. I’m no expert on those details but it’s not likely the Russians have put out scholarly assessments. They are still reluctant (as is our CIA) to declassify documents.”

Not a Zionist?

TEL AVIV, JANUARY 9TH—The Churchill Society of Israel, a Churchill Centre affiliate supported by Sir Martin Gilbert, will serve Israelis with an interest in Sir Winston, according to Russell Rothstein, an American immigrant behind the plans: “Churchill’s long-standing support of Zionism and friendship with the Jewish people make it particularly appropriate that the modern state of Israel have a local organisation devoted to his memory and to preserving his thoughts, words and deeds for future generations.”

Sir Martin Gilbert writes: “Churchill was very familiar with the Old Testament. He wrote about the Children of Israel who understood and adopted ideas which even ancient Greece and Rome, for all their power, failed to comprehend. He was familiar with the Zionist ideal and supported the idea of a Jewish state.”

But Israeli Professor Eli Shaltiel, who claims to be a Churchill scholar, disputes Churchill’s credentials: “He was no stranger to the latent anti-Semitism of his generation and class….he lost interest in Zionism after his close >>
friend Lord Moyne was assassinated by Stern Gang extremists in Cairo in November 1944.”

—Tim Walker in the Daily Telegraph (http://tgr.ph/zwOPOT)

- FH’s opinion: Churchill, who had many close Jewish friends throughout life, was a Zionist from the time he represented the heavily Jewish constituency of Manchester North West in 1908. As Colonial Secretary in 1921 he strove for a Jewish homeland in Palestine (which few remember was 6/7ths Arab, consisting of modern Jordan as well as Israel). In the 1930s he stridently spoke against Hitler’s pogroms and the British government’s anti-Semitic Palestine White Paper. His speeches from 1948 to 1955 were replete with pro-Israel sentiments. Ever the optimist, he hoped for reconciliation between Arabs and Jews.

But Churchill was not an uncritical friend. Outraged when his friend Lord Moyne (Walter Guinness), Minister Resident in Cairo, was shot with his driver by members of the terrorist Stern Gang on 5 November 1944, Churchill suggested the Colonial Secretary, Oliver Stanley, should impress upon Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann that the Jewish Agency “do all in their power to suppress these terrorist activities.” Martin Gilbert’s Winston S. Churchill, volume 7, records his speech to the Commons at that time: “If there is to be any hope of a peaceful and successful future for Zionism, these wicked activities must cease, and those responsible for them must be destroyed root and branch.”

The Israeli e-zine Haaretz (http://bit.ly/xlYNxu) further quotes Shaltiel as saying “Churchill made a number of anti-Semitic statements.”

Which statements, and when? It is hard to reply to this sort of unattributed, unspecific, unsubstantiated er, mishegas.

On his 75th birthday Churchill received a message from David Ben-Gurion, Israel’s first prime minister: “Your words and your deeds are indelibly engraved in the annals of humanity. Happy the people that has produced such a son.”

“King’s Speech” Now on Stage

GUILDFORD, SURREY, FEBRUARY 10TH—At Guildford’s Yvonne Arnaud theatre, playwright David Seidler had more room to explore the story’s historical background than the award-winning cinema version (FH 150:44) allowed,” writes Michael Billington in The Guardian (http://bit.ly/AmiTdN).

Billington adds: “Seidler underplays Churchill’s machinations that would have seen him become leader of ‘a King’s Party’ that would have opposed Baldwin’s government and torn the country apart.”

The “King’s Party” notion is urban myth caused by loose reading of facts. Martin Gilbert’s document volumes to the official biography, containing Churchill’s communications at the time, make it clear that while WSC was happy to embarrass the Baldwin government, he was too smart a politician to think they could be dislodged by a third or fourth party.

Churchill’s main motivation was his misplaced loyalty to a Sovereign. Unlike most politicians, he later admitted that he had been wrong.

Saving War Horses

LONDON, DECEMBER 31ST—In a well-researched article in The Mail on Sunday, Chris Hastings offers a subtext for the new Spielberg film “War Horse”: the story of how Churchill helped save tens of thousands of stranded war horses in Europe after World War I, characteristic of WSC’s love of animals:

“British military chiefs were heavily dependent on horsepower to carry men, supplies and artillery, and spent more than £36 million during the war to buy up 1.1 million horses from Britain, Canada and the U.S. War Office documents found in the National Archives at Kew show that tens of thousands of the animals were at risk of disease, hunger and even death at the hands of French and Belgian butchers because bungling officials couldn’t get them home when hostilities drew to a close.

“Churchill, then aged 44 and Secretary of State for War, reacted with fury. In a strongly worded missive dated 13 February 1919, Churchill told Lieutenant-General Sir Travers Clarke, then the Army Quartermaster-General: ‘If it is so serious, what have you been doing about it?’ The letter of the Commander-In-Chief discloses a complete failure on the part of the Ministry of Shipping to meet its obligations and scores of thousands of horses will be left in France under extremely disadvantageous conditions.’”

Churchill’s intervention led to extra vessels being used for repatriation, and the number of horses being returned rose to 9000 a week. For the story see (bit.ly/rTmDIE).

Overrated!

LONDON, JANUARY 5TH—BBC History magazine decided to ask British historians to name the most overrated people in history. The answers: Charles Darwin, Spartacus, Malcolm X, Napoleon, Mary Queen of Scots—and
Churchill features twice in the popular British soap classic “Downton Abbey,” which boasts more plot twists than an Ian Fleming thriller. As World War I breaks out, Lord Grantham, Downton’s master, declares he will join his regiment: “Churchill went back to the front after the Gallipoli business, why shouldn’t I?” (Saner heads prevail.) In Season 2 is another Churchill reference, to the 1912 Marconi scandal (FH 153:35 footnote). The best lines are assigned to actress Maggie Smith, the redoubtable Dowager Countess. She shields her eyes from an electrified chandelier like a vampire exposed to sunlight; greets the arrival of a telephone “as if we are living in an H.G. Wells novel.” Shocked by floral arrangements, she exclaims: “These are more suitable for a communion—in, oh, some place like southern Italy.” For the top ten Maggie Moments, see http://bit.ly/yIeDen.

On December 9th Sir Winston Churchill was named the greatest British gentleman in a poll of 4000 people. Runner-up was Sir David Attenborough, the natural history filmmaker. Television’s Stephen Fry was third, just ahead of Prince William. The next four slots went to Colin Firth (George VI in “The King’s Speech”), David Niven, Sir Roger Moore and Sir Michael Caine. Clothiers Austin Moore and Sir Michael Caine, who carried out the poll, said: “Sir Winston Churchill showed unprecedented courage and strength to lead this country and is a worthy choice as the greatest British gentleman.” Reed’s made Churchill’s famous siren suits during the war. WSC also handily beat off modern figures including David Beckham, Jenson Button and David Tennant, who “epitomise effortless style and have a real flair for fashion—an essential trait for any gentleman.”

“Between Christmas and the New Year, the 70th anniversary of an event which changed history passed almost unnoticed. On December 26, 1941, less than three weeks after Japan had attacked Pearl Harbor, Churchill addressed both branches of the U.S. Congress. The Prime Minister, who was in Washington to settle military strategy with Roosevelt, excoriated the Axis powers with the question: ‘What kind of a people do they think we are?’ It wasn’t his finest oratorical effort, but it was clever. As well as denouncing the forces of darkness and the enormity of their aggression, it was an invitation to Britons, suffering the horrors of war at home, to reflect on the challenge ahead. He was, in effect, asking fellow citizens: ‘Of what are we made?’

“Seven decades later, one wonders how the great man would view the kind of people we have become. What has happened to the freedoms and independence for which he urged us to fight? It’s hard to imagine our wartime chieftain being anything other than dismayed by the erosion of sovereignty, capitulation to the ‘equalities industry’ and enslavement by debt. We have lost control of domestic borders, ceded legal primacy to Europe and allowed the Storm Troopers of political correctness to stamp their corrosive version of right and wrong on British law.”

—This opinion piece by Jeff Randall, in the Daily Telegraph, 30 January 2012 (the full text may be found at http://tgr.ph/A80C0f), drew 800 comments in the first twenty-four hours. Opinions, anyone?  

Winston Churchill! This is new? People were calling Churchill overrated as early as 1915, and the cacophony has scarcely stopped since.

Former BBC journalist Christopher Lee joins the long line of people who think Churchill overrated: “If it had not been for the fact that he led Britain to victory in the Second World War, we would have scant memory of [him].” This is like saying that if Lincoln hadn’t freed the slaves, he would be forgotten. Churchill’s problem is that what he did in 1940 so eclipsed everything else that people cannot grasp the rest of his career. Had Churchill’s urgings been followed, and what he called the “unnecessary war” avoided, he would still be in the history books as the early 20th century’s highest paid writer, the Nobel Prize-winning author of Marlborough and The World Crisis, an endlessly fascinating statesman and orator involved for good or ill in all the great reform movements from the Welfare State to Indian independence. Ah, but never mind. Almost simultaneously, a poll for “the best English gentleman” found WSC topping the list, ahead of Prince William, Michael Caine and Roger Moore. (See “Around & About,” above.) RML

Castaway Robert Hardy

LONDON, NOVEMBER 25TH—Honorary Member Robert Hardy took his turn selecting favorite music on “Desert Island Discs.” The BBC weekly programme, heard since 1942, asks a celebrity to imagine being a cast away on a desert isle and allowed only eight audio records, the Bible, the complete works of Shakespeare and one luxury (excluding sailboats, yachts and rafts).

Beloved by us for his seven appearances as the consummate Churchill—as well as Cornelius Fudge in the Harry Potter films, Siegfried Farnon in the classic “All Creatures Great and >>
Small,” and Shakespeare roles seriatim, Hardy chose Pearl Bailey’s “What Is a Friend For?”; Beethoven’s 7th Symphony in A Major (2nd Mvmt.); Enya’s “The Longhouse”; Hector Berlioz’s waltz from the “Symphonie Fantastique”; Francis Poulenc’s “Suite Française”; Sibelius’ 6th Symphony in D Minor (4th Mvmt.); and Beethoven’s String Quartet in B flat (2nd Mvmt.).

Set aside an hour to listen to our friend’s dialogue on the programme. Particularly amusing is what the young Judi Dench told him happened when he kissed her years ago in “Henry V”—and how elegantly he expresses it. The video is at bbc.in/rzTMTM.

• Trivia question: Who was the first castaway on “Desert Island Discs”? Sarah Churchill’s husband, musician-comedian Judi Dench told him happened when he kissed her years ago in “Henry V”—and how elegantly he expresses it. The video is at bbc.in/rzTMTM.

ONE-WOMAN CSC PLAY

HERTFORD, HERTS., FEBRUARY 3RD—There have been several one-man Churchill performances, but to our knowledge never a one-woman Clementine show, until this stage production, “My Darling Clemmie,” at the Hertford Theatre. Rohan McCullough, who played an excellent Clementine in “The Gathering Storm” is in the title role. Hugh Whitemore directed both.

Through the memories of an older Clementine, the audience is taken on a journey of the couple’s emotional and political harmony in their early years together and how their relationship becomes increasingly fraught owing to wider political forces, Churchill’s rise to power and the changes in his manner as events develop.

—HERTFORDSHIRE MERCURY

VIDEO TROVE AVAILABLE

LONDON, FEBRUARY 17TH—Pathé News, one of the world’s oldest and largest repositories of vintage news footage, unveiled 3500 new hours (half a year of 24/7 viewing) of video prominently featuring Winston Churchill.

The site (www.britishpathe.com) brings up hundreds of fascinating Churchill items, including speeches, appearances and tours, such as the following: Army maneuvers, 1927; WSC atop the Empire State Building as a guest of former New York Governor Al Smith, 1932; Randolph Churchill’s wedding to Pamela Digby, 1939; Churchill in Ottawa, 1941; WSC’s visit to the Mideast, 1943; WSC with Stalin, Eden and Molotov in Moscow for the “Tolstoy” talks, 1944; and WSC’s election statement, 1945. One of the earliest items, dated 1924, is headlined, “Winston Loses by 45 Votes.”

The films can be viewed online at no charge and permanent downloads can be purchased. Still photos are included and each film is accompanied by notes identifying the date, place and featured personalities.

British Pathé began producing its biweekly newsreels in 1910 and accumulated over 90,000 items by the time production came to an end in 1970. Its material has been used around the world in television programs, advertisements, corporate productions and, most recently, in web publishing.

THE NEW CHURCHILL?

NEW YORK, JANUARY 5TH—No sooner did President Obama get through comparing himself with Lincoln, FDR and Lyndon Johnson, than a candidate to replace him, Newt Gingrich, began to be compared to Churchill by pundits trying to explain his rise in the polls. The idea is that Gingrich like Churchill was a failed politician who only became viable when his nation was in extremis. And now another candidate, former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum, declared that while he “wouldn’t even say my name in the same breath,” he really was like Churchill because he never gave in: “…they did run me out of town in Pennsylvania…. [I was] saying words like Churchill back then but they didn’t want to hear it…."

Will politicians kindly stop pretending to be someone else and just concentrate on being who they are?

DRIVING MISS NANCY

MODBURY, DEVON, JANUARY 1ST—The Daily Mail (http://bit.ly/rhy7Vq) reports restoration of a 1923 Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost “once used by Sir Winston Churchill” by Devon restorer Charlie Tople: “The vintage motor is said to have served the former British
Prime Minister when he used it to give driving lessons to the first female MP, Lady Astor, on a Kent estate.” Indeed! Churchill, a notoriously impatient and fairly scary driver who would sometimes take to the pavement (sidewalk) when halted in traffic jams, mainly stopped driving himself in the 1920s, when he was last seen navigating London streets in a lowly Wolseley. The idea of Churchill in this big Rolls, teaching technique to Nancy Astor (with whom he barely shared a civil word), strains the imagination, though it does conjure up some amusing images.

Sloop WC Remembered
SYDNEY, JANUARY 5TH — The 15-meter sloop Winston Churchill is one of several Churchill namesake vessels to have carried a heroic crew. The venerable sailboat, the oldest vessel named for Sir Winston, sank during the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race in 1998, but all hands were rescued. The heroism of her crew matches that of the USS Winston S. Churchill, the most famous bearer of the name now afloat.

The story of their survival, writes Paul Kalina in the Sydney Morning Herald, is part of a new film by Graham McNeice on Australians who defied narrow brushes with death, aired on Australia’s Foxtel Bio Channel.

Originally a yawl, the Winston Churchill was built of huon pine by Percy Coverdale of Hobart, Tasmania in 1942. Restored at the cost of A$360,000 by Richard Winning, she was sloop-rigged with a new aluminum mainmast. Mr. Winning was not interested in winning: he sailed for “a bit of recreation—gentleman’s ocean racing,” when he began entering the Churchill in races. We covered his effort in Finest Hour 100:6 under the title, “We’re Only Here for the Beer.”

Polish Protest
SOUTH RUISLIP, MIDDLESEX, JANUARY 12TH — One Paul Bonowicz protested at the A40 roundabout, saying he was against “the lies which were put in British books about Churchill....I am Polish and we know he betrayed Polish people....He knew about the Holocaust, he knew Jewish people were dying, but he didn’t help. After the war there was a deal between Churchill and Stalin, and the price was Poland. Part of my country was sold to the Soviets. It was Churchill who decided which part....”

- FH’s opinion: Churchill did know about the Holocaust, did try to do something about it—and was the only allied leader who did.


In 1938 as a result of Munich the Teschen District of Czechoslovakia was “sold to the Poles,” who happily took it. At the close of World War II Churchill first protested, then acquiesced, and ultimately agonized over shifting of Poland to the west: “I think a mistake has been made, in which the Provisional (Communist) Government of Poland have been an ardent partner,” he told the Commons on 16 August 1945.

With the Red Army occupying all of Poland by 1945, there was little Churchill could do except hope (forlornly) that Stalin would make good his promise of free elections. Of Poland Churchill sadly observed in August 1945: “There are few virtues that the Poles do not possess—and there are few mistakes they have ever avoided.”

Churchillian Frank
LONDON, JANUARY 23RD— Frank Sinatra was a Churchillophile, according to Paul Sexton, who produced a BBC documentary on Sinatra’s only album recorded outside America, “Frank Sinatra Sings Great Songs from Great Britain,” featuring composers like Noel Coward and Ivor Novello. Sinatra asked thatWSC paint a portrait for the album’s cover: When this was denied, “he made do with a silhouette of Big Ben.”

This jibes with the late bodyguard Sgt. Edmund Murray’s account of intervening with an admirer at Monte Carlo in the late Fifties: “...I recognized him immediately but I had already begun to ask him, very politely, if I could help him. ‘That’s okay,’ he said, ‘I’m just going to say hello to my friend Sir Winston.’ The voice was very American. ‘Well, sir,’ I said, ‘I’m from Scotland Yard and as you can see, Sir Winston is engaged in conversation at the present moment and cannot be disturbed. Could I have your name, please?’ If looks could kill, I would have been dead immediately, as the man glared at me, then turned and walked out of the Casino. It was Frank Sinatra.”

Errata
Finest Hour 152: On page 15, column 2, it is not certain that Churchill spoke about “being hanged” to a reporter at a press conference; in footnote 16, reference should be McGowan’s first edition (London: Souvenir Press, 1958), not the Pan Books 1959 edition.

Finest Hour 153: On page 39, column 1, top, Winant was born in 1889 not 1899 and his biographer was not John Bellushi but Bernard Bellush. On page 45, column 2, top, the reference to “America’s Churchill Museum” in Fulton is incorrect and should read “the National Churchill Museum,” a title granted by the U.S. Congress.
Riddles Mysteries Enigmas

Q In the Wall Street Journal letters column, 2 August 2011, I read that Churchill “had a rule of never criticizing a policy after the event unless he had given his opinion before.” Did he really have such a rule?

A In his preface to The World Crisis, volume 1 (1923), Churchill writes: “I have made or implied no criticism of any decision of action taken or neglected by others, unless I can prove that I had expressed the same opinion in writing before the event.” And, in his preface to The Gathering Storm (1948): “I have adhered to my rule of never criticizing any measure of war or policy after the event unless I had before expressed publicly or formally my opinion or warning about it. Indeed in the after-light I have softened many of the severities of contemporary controversy. It has given me pain to record these disagreements with so many men whom I liked or respected; but it would be wrong not to lay the lessons of the past before the future.”

He adhered to that rule, with some difference of emphasis. His Rhineland crisis account was more censorious than he was in 1936. (See “Churchill and the Rhineland,” FH 141.)

I am writing a book on Leadership and am seeking your assistance in finding the original sources for the following unattributed Churchill quotes that I have collected over the years:

1. “The greatest lesson in life is to know that even fools are right sometimes.”
2. “Do not fritter away your energies on small schemes.”
3. “Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.”
4. “Kites rise highest against the wind, not with it.”
5. “…do not become the passive matrix upon which others impose their designs.”
6. “Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.”
7. “A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”
8. “Mountaintops inspire leaders but valleys mature them.”
9. “…to encounter [Franklin] Roosevelt, with all his buoyant sparkle, his iridescent personality, and his sublime confidence, was like opening your first bottle of champagne”

—H. GARRETT HAYWARD


Alas, quite a few things he never said are attributed to Churchill and others without authority, to make them more interesting, including some of these: 1/3/6/7/8. These five quotations have no attribution among Churchill’s 15 million published words, books, articles, speeches and private papers. (Regarding #7, he did say, “We remember the sardonic war-time joke about the optimist and the pessimist. The optimist was the man who did not mind what happened so long as it did not happen to him. The pessimist was the man who lived with the optimist.”)

2. Mr. Hayward himself later sent us the correct quote: “Well, I want this government not to fritter away its energies on all sorts of small schemes; I want them to concentrate on one or two things which will be big landmarks in the history of this Parliament…” —Martin Gilbert, Winston S. Churchill, vol. 5, Prophet of Truth 1922-1939 (London, 1976), 70. It seems this comment on a specific government has been turned into an all-purpose aphorism.

4. Mr. Hayward tracked this to American lawyer, author and critic John Neal (1793-1876): “a certain amount of opposition is a great help to a man. Kites rise against, and not with, the wind. Even a head wind is better than none. No man ever worked his passage anywhere in a dead calm…."

The two remaining quotes can actually be ascribed to Churchill:

5. Commenting on the London Naval Treaty in the House of Commons on 15 May 1930, Churchill said the treaty constituted “a formal acceptance by Great Britain of definitely inferior seapower.” At the end of his speech Churchill declared bitterly: “We are the passive matrix on which others imprint their claims.” —Martin Gilbert, Winston S. Churchill, vol. 6 Finest Hour 1939-1941 (London, 1983), 146.

9. “…to encounter Roosevelt, with all his buoyant sparkle, his iridescent personality, and his sublime confidence, was like opening your first bottle of champagne. That physical effect it had on you was like the effect champagne had.” —Undated, Halle Papers, Kennedy Library, Boston. #
Reflections on Canada: “A Friend Is Someone Who Knows All About You, but Likes You”

No scholar is a more lyrical writer than Professor David Dilks, who would never claim this of himself, so I will do it for him. We know him for his book The Great Dominion, and his stunning “The Queen and Mr. Churchill” (FH 135), and now for the leading essay in our Canada Number—created to complement the 29th International Churchill Conference in Toronto on October 11-14th.

Not everything in his piece reflects well on American handling of Canada, Churchill and Britain. A poignant episode was when Churchill learned of the U.S. H-bomb test by reading a story in The Manchester Guardian. But history is history, and understanding history, as Churchill once put it, is the key to understanding statecraft.

We can hear Winston Churchill’s famous 1941 “Some Chicken! Some Neck!” speech in Ottawa on our website (http://bit.ly/xRWzm2), and find it in several books. But Finest Hour here offers what other sources do not: the precise text, meticulously confirmed from the broadcast by Ronald Cohen, with key passages picked out in bold italics, along with contemporary photos, and comments on the speech by three Churchill authorities. It might be best, in fact, to read pages 23-28 while listening on our website, since the old audio is a little unclear.

With Dilks and Churchill to lead it, our Canada Number (the first since FH 44 back in 1984) came together beautifully, thanks to the strenuous efforts of the Canadians who largely wrote it for you.

Finest Hour has searched for Yousuf Karsh’s 1941 Churchill photographs since we first found “Karsh 3” (WSC with Mackenzie King) in a 1965 Toronto documentary. Last autumn we produced “Karsh 4.” Now, thanks to Terry Reardon, we have all seven—on our cover and spread across Karsh’s personal recollection of his experience. Karsh himself never spoke of the “supplemental” photos—after the inimitable “Angry Lion,” who would? But they make for a wonderful cover by Charlotte Thibault, and story starting on page 29.

The 1942 raid on Dieppe, and Churchill’s role in it, described on pages 32-36 by Terry Reardon, was a tribute both to Canadian valor and to the ineptness of its planners—whomever they were. Who were they? The jury is still out. It seems that hunting for the chief perpetrator of the raid on Dieppe is like old Diogenes with his lantern, searching for an honest man.

John Plumpton’s “Encounters with Canadians” (pages 37-42) began as a rewrite of his FH essay twenty-five years ago, but morphed into a thorough appreciation of Churchill’s ups and downs with a host of Canadians from Wilfrid Laurier to Lester Pearson. John follows this with a thoughtful piece on Canada in the brave new multi-polar world of the present (pages 48-49).

When Gordon Walker sent us “In the Line: Canada’s Continuous Contributions to Victory” (pages 46-47), we were struck not only by Canada’s lopsided per capita effort in blood and treasure, but the way she was shunted aside in World War II Allied councils. Churchill, David Dilks tells us, didn’t like this. We are glad to know he did not.

Growing up in New York City, I thought of Canada as a cool place with a waterfall and snappy, red-coated policemen, but never as a foreign country. It still seems “unforeign,” but in the last thirty years I learned much more about a good and great nation, embodiment of the old saying, “A friend is someone who knows all about you, but likes you.” And I could not help adopting as a subtitle David Dilks’s encomium: “Thank you a thousand times.”
Winston Churchill’s robust defence of Britain’s conduct in South Africa. The exchanges became refreshingly emphatic. Hence his first words on the platform at Montreal, more fervent than accurate: “Thank God, we are once more on British soil.”

Fifty-four years later, Sir Winston Churchill alighted in Canada for the ninth and last time. “I love coming to Canada,” he said. “Canada is the masterlink in Anglo-American unity, apart from all her other glories.” During that visit, the old statesman remarked—and in French at that—that he dared to think of Canada as being almost his own country.

How astonishing it seems to a later generation, always identifying Churchill with the British Empire, to realise that Canada was the sole country of the Commonwealth which he knew closely. He did not return to India after 1899. He
Churchill had entered the Cabinet while still in his 30s, served as President of the Board of Trade, Home Secretary, First Lord of the Admiralty, Minister of Munitions, Secretary of State for War, Secretary of State for Air, Secretary of State for the Colonies and, most recently, Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Musing, as former Chancellors will, on how agreeable it was to be free of any responsibility for England’s tiresome financial affairs, he arranged for a reenactment of the battle of the Heights of Abraham and distributed the parts among his travelling party. He surprised them by assigning to himself the role of General Montcalm and to his young son Randolph the more heroic part of Wolfe. His ploy soon became apparent; the stage Wolfe had to scramble in perilous style up the Heights, while the latter-day Montcalm viewed the scene with some detachment from aloft.

During that 1929 visit, Churchill spoke in almost all the great cities of Canada: Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Regina, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver and >>


By the turn of the century, when young Winston Churchill made his way to North America without even waiting to take his seat in Parliament, he had already learned how to earn a handsome living by his pen. Mastery of the written word was one thing; of the spoken, something different. His skills as a speaker, to which he owed more than any other Prime Minister in our modern history, developed from a process by no means instinctive. The Ottawa Evening Journal remarked of his address there at Christmas, 1900, “He evidently does not make any pretensions to oratory.”

At Winnipeg he found the people “furiously British” and his visit to them “most exhilarating.” Well he might. “Fancy,” he wrote to his mother, “twenty years ago there were only a few mud huts—tents: and last night a magnificent audience of men in evening dress & ladies half out of it, filled a fine opera house and we took $1150 at the doors. £230: more than is to say than in cities like Newcastle. Winnipeg has a wonderful future before it.”

Starting with no capital, Churchill had by his own estimate made £10,000 in less than two years. He confessed himself very proud of the fact that not one person in a million could have accomplished such a feat at his age. Regaining England in February 1901,
he sent to his improvident mother a cheque for £300, accompanied by a note which reveals as much of the recipient as of the writer: “In a certain sense it belongs to you; for I could never have earned it had you not transmitted to me the wit and energy which are necessary.”

Canada’s heroic record during the First World War commanded the enthusiastic approval of Churchill. That the same response would follow if Europe launched itself into a renewed orgy of destruction was by no means a foregone conclusion, for Canada now stood wholly independent in her foreign policy. Only after Members of Parliament had been summoned to Ottawa from every part of the vast Dominion did Canada go to war in 1939, a week after other constituent countries of the Commonwealth and Empire. To his credit, Mackenzie King pointed out to Churchill in August 1941 that Canada’s ability to act with a united Cabinet resulted from the Munich agreement and the policy which Chamberlain had pursued towards Germany. Only when it was clear that there was no alternative, that genuine efforts had been made to meet German grievances, was it possible for Canada to enter the fray without a profound division between the parties, and English- and French-speaking parts of Canada.

“Give all thou canst; high Heaven rejects the lore Of nicely-calculated less or more.”

No such calculation determined Canada’s decision in September, 1939. If it had been a matter merely of measuring advantage, Canada might well have followed the example of the United States and remained neutral. After all, the geography, politics and strategy of the world were broadly speaking the same for both countries. Churchill and Mackenzie King had differing mental habits, assumptions, reactions; we can almost catch the sniff of disapproval when King said to him one night, “The great thing in politics is to avoid mistakes.” Where Churchill was ebullient, exuberant and often unrestrained in his language, liked to drink deep, sit up all hours, and did not scruple to call Hitler a bloodthirsty guttersnipe and Mussolini a jackal, King was careful, reserved and prosaic in conversation, had resolved not to touch alcohol for the duration of the war and imagined slights where none was intended.

Nevertheless, a growing warmth developed between them. King responded to Churchill’s charm, the more persuasive because ungushing and unforced. We may aver with confidence that none but Churchill could have induced the Prime Minister of Canada to dance with him in the great hall at Chequers. That no artist was at hand to record in a few strokes the spectacle of those two chubby figures in close embrace is a loss to history and King’s diary remarks candidly that “All present were almost in hysterics with laughter.” Only Mrs. Churchill could have persuaded him to take a glass of champagne by way of marking the successful conclusion of the Second Quebec Conference in autumn 1944.

Before the first Christmas of the war, battalions of Canadian soldiers had reached Britain. These were people surrendering their careers, businesses, homes and families, to set off into the unknown. Every man-jack was a volunteer. Many did not go back, or returned wounded. Some were away from Canada for five or six years. >>

9. Mackenzie King Diary, 23 August 1941; microfilm copy, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds.
When the first Quebec Conference was about to convene, it became apparent that President Roosevelt would not allow any Canadian representatives to take part. This was embarrassing to Churchill. He had assumed the opposite and already said so to Mackenzie King, who accepted the awkward position with good grace. King remarked later that he had played a role at the two Quebec conferences somewhat akin to that of the General Manager of the Château Frontenac.

“Thank you a Thousand Times”...

Even now, it is hard to grasp the scale and speed of the transformation. In the spring of 1939, the armed forces of Canada amounted to scarcely more than 10,000 men all told. Canadian divisions fought valiantly in Sicily, through Italy, France, the Low Countries and into Germany. (See Gordon Walker’s article later in this issue. —Ed.)

This is by no means the extent of Canada’s service to the Allied cause. For example, the country produced armaments on a vast scale. Without the food from Canada and other parts of the Commonwealth, notably Australia and New Zealand, Great Britain would have starved. It is right to place on the other side of the ledger a fact often neglected, what might be called a supreme act of lend-lease: without the use of the British Isles for the air campaign, the training of the armies, the launching of the armadas, no invasion of western Europe would have been possible.

While Roosevelt, like all his predecessors with the exception of Wilson, never set foot in Britain while in office, the older Churchill made repeated visits to the USA. As the PM used to say with a twinkle, no lover ever studied the whims of his mistress with the care which he had devoted to the President. Churchill had with some delicacy kept the Prime Minister of Canada, who in all these matters behaved towards Britain with extraordinary tact and goodwill, at arm’s length for his meeting with Roosevelt off the coast of Newfoundland in 1941. The meeting produced the Atlantic Charter and some decidedly some un-neutral decisions by the Americans. In his schoolboyish way, Churchill broke away one afternoon and insisted on going ashore in a small boat. Landing on a shingle-strewn beach, he scrambled up a little cliff and pleased himself by rolling boulders down it, as if he were General Montcalm again.

When the hinge of fate had begun unmistakably to turn, and the first Quebec Conference was about to convene in 1943, it became apparent that President Roosevelt would not allow any Canadian representatives to take part. That was embarrassing to Churchill. He had assumed the opposite and already said so to Mackenzie King, who accepted the awkward position with good grace. The point being put to him again, Roosevelt refused to entertain any suggestion that the Canadian Chiefs of Staff might share the plenary meetings with their American and British counterparts. He replied that sooner than permit anything of the kind, he would prefer not to come to Canada but to hold the conference elsewhere, perhaps in Bermuda. But it was soon acknowledged on all sides that no more suitable place than Quebec could have been found for this momentous meeting as the tide of battle had begun to turn in their favour.

After D-Day, with victory in sight if only at a distance, another plenary conference was urgently needed. The impending Presidential election conveniently ruled out any question of London; Quebec therefore suggested itself again. Once more the Canadian Prime Minister and Chiefs of Staff behaved with self-abnegation and understanding, King remarking afterwards that he had played a role at the two Quebec conferences somewhat akin to that of the General Manager of the Château Frontenac.

Let us recall with gratitude that the Canadian government insisted on paying for everything—every last thing: the special trains, the hurriedly-constructed ramps for the President’s wheelchair, fleets of cars available day and night, all the communications and the princely hospitality, even the oranges specially flown from Florida. They disappeared from the menu at the Château Frontenac the moment the delegates dispersed.

At the beginning of the war, the Dominions had a population of some 30 million. Of them rather more than 11 million lived in Canada. Upon this slender human base, scattered over the second largest country in the world, an enormous industrial and military effort was raised. Together, Britain and the overseas Commonwealth put into the field more than 11 million men and women. The governments and peoples of the Commonwealth were the only ones which fought from the beginning of the war to the end. They mourned more than 500,000 killed, including 60,000 who lost their lives in air-raids in Britain and 30,000 who perished in the merchant navy. The United States lost some 300,000 lives, a fact which I mention not in order to draw sly comparisons but to remind us of something which in these postwar years of overwhelming American predominance we easily forget: until the summer of 1944, Britain and the Commonwealth had more divisions in fighting contact with the enemy than the U.S., and consistently fought more of the war at sea and in the air.
Although we sometimes hear assertions that victory was secured by the might of the Red Army or the irresistible strength of the United States, it was a more complicated business than that. Countries of the Commonwealth such as Britain and Canada gave everything they had and without that effort the war could not have been won. If a batsqueak of British pride is still permissible, let us also recall that by 1940 the UK was spending 50 percent of its national income on the direct needs of the war, thanks to the decisions of the much-maligned Baldwin and Chamberlain governments; a fact which even modern writing about the 1930s scarcely acknowledges, and a figure which—need I say?—had never previously been approached. No belligerent in any part of the world outmatched those figures.

Pearl Harbour transformed the outlook, political and strategic. In the immediate aftermath, the President made a deeply significant telephone call to the Prime Minister of Canada. “There will have to be a Supreme Council,” he said, “and I am determined it shall have its headquarters in Washington.”13 And there over Christmas, 1941, Roosevelt, Churchill and the military staffs agreed that the first object of Allied strategy must be the defeat of Germany, and that the USA and the Commonwealth should wage the war together. A few days later, Churchill delivered a celebrated speech in Ottawa (see page 23) and dined with King at his home, Laurier House.

After a struggle of conscience, King had allowed cocktails to be brought in from a neighbouring club. Asked what he would care to drink, Churchill replied—we must imagine out of sheer mischief—“tomato juice.” Over dinner, his host said, “Canada plans to make an immediate gift to you of one billion dollars.” (See Gordon Walker’s article following.)

We must turn to the subject of atomic weapons. In that field the British possessed a good deal of knowledge and scientific expertise. The United States had not only distinguished scientists but invulnerability to air attack and vast reserves of cash. Canada held some of the indispensable minerals. Here was the North Atlantic Triangle, sometimes thought of as mere theory or aspiration, working well in practice, despite early bickerings and misunderstandings. Here was the war at its most secret; even the code name “Tube Alloys” was struck out of the telegrams circulated to members of the War Cabinet in London. The Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee, scarcely knew of the enterprise; whereas Mackenzie King knew everything and in the person of C.D. Howe had a hard-driving and highly-respected minister with a seat on the Board which controlled the project.

After his 1929 visit, Churchill described British Columbia, somewhat in the style of his exclamation at the station in Montreal, as “a wonderful possession,”14 as if it were British territory. While it would be foolish to place undue weight on this or that remark, it is broadly true that Churchill in the earlier part of the war accepted without enthusiasm the facts of Dominion independence. The formalities of the position he understood well enough: but the surge of support from >>

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the Dominions arose from no neat reading of contractual obligations. Britain’s own contribution was inevitably and properly the largest; in most theatres the Allied forces stood until the entry of the United States under British command. It was not until the conclusion of the second Quebec Conference, in September 1944, that Britain’s High Commissioner in Ottawa could write privately to London of the great pains which Churchill had taken to keep Mackenzie King and his colleagues informed:

… his attitude with the Canadians is far better now than it was up to eighteen months ago. He is friendly and generally approachable, gives them lots of confidential information, and is more or less ready to discuss patiently and reasonably any question which they wish to raise. This makes them feel that he regards them as real comrades. They used to admire him enormously, but from a distance and with a certain sense that they were naughty children whom the headmaster saw occasionally with no particular pleasure. They now admire him at least as much as they ever did, not only as a great but forbidding leader, but also as a friend and good companion. Relations between him and them are really excellent. Of course, it doesn’t do any harm with them when he indicates clearly, as he did at his meeting with them the other day, that he thinks they have done a really magnificent job and hopes that they will be returned to power again at the next Election!

At the end of the meeting he made a very sincere and moving speech to Mr. Mackenzie King and his colleagues about Canada’s war effort and the position of greatly enhanced importance which this has given the Dominion in world affairs. Mackenzie King replied with some equally sincere and moving words about Canada’s admiration and affection for Winston. It was a good show.15

Although we sometimes hear assertions that victory was secured by the might of the Red Army, it was a more complicated business than that. Britain and Canada gave everything they had and without that effort the war could not have been won. By 1940 the UK was spending 50 percent of its national income on the direct needs of the war, thanks to the decisions of the much maligned Baldwin and Chamberlain Governments. Until the summer of 1944, Britain and the Commonwealth had more divisions in fighting contact with the enemy than the United States.

Churchill returned to Downing Street, a month short of his 77th birthday, in October 1951. He discovered that Attlee’s Labour government had built, but had not had time to test, an atomic bomb: a development which had been assiduously concealed not only from Parliament but from most members of the Cabinet. The large sums required had been ingeniously smuggled through by presenting false estimates year after year. As Churchill remarked afterwards to President Eisenhower, Britain was becoming an atomic power “thanks to Attlee’s somewhat unconstitutional exertions.”16

Because the United States had broken off collaboration with Britain in these matters, both as to information and materials, shortly after the war, the British bomb had been built through a heavy duplication of effort, not to mention expense. Churchill’s first thought on regaining office was to set off for Washington and Ottawa. Here in 1952 was a scene far less favourable than everyone had hoped in 1945; rather, here was a world on the brink of another catastrophe, a fact which he confronted squarely in his speech at the Château Laurier. The Prime Minister’s Private Secretary, Jock Colville, seeing his master’s exhaustion, prepared a draft. Churchill, lying in bed at the Governor-General’s residence, read it through: “This is very good”; and then, after a pause, “too good.” Another silence fell. “I may feel bound to use it…” Then he suddenly threw aside the bedclothes, summoned a “young lady” of respectable age and dictated a script of his own, saying that he could not bring himself to play a deceitful trick upon the Canadians by reading out the words of someone else.17

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation interpreter in Montreal, whose task was to render Churchill’s oration into French for the population of Quebec, was thus obliged to tackle his task without a text. We may spare a thought for him. What to say when Churchill lamented, “Peace does not sit untroubled in her vineyard”? Little wonder that a silence ensued in the translation or that “La paix n’est pas encore assurée” has the sense without the magic. Here is part of what was heard by the largest audience up to that time which had ever listened to a broadcast in North America:

Tonight in our gathering we make a valiant and, I believe, unconquerable assertion of the spirit of our combined identity and survival. We have surmounted all the perils and endured all the agonies of the past. We shall provide against and thus prevail over the dangers and problems of the future, withhold no sacrifice, grudge no toil, seek no sordid gain, fear no foe. All will be well. We have, I believe, within us the life-strength and guiding light by which the tormented world around us may find its harbour of safety, after a storm-beaten voyage.

This year will mark the 85th anniversary of Canada’s confederation. A magnificent future awaits Canada if only we can all get through the present hideous world muddle. When I first came here after the Boer War, these mighty lands had but five million inhabitants. Now there are 14 million. When
my grandchildren come here, there may well be 30 million. Upon the whole surface of the globe there is no more spacious and splendid domain open to the activity and genius of free men, with one hand clasping in enduring friendship the United States, and the other spread across the ocean both to Britain and to France. You have a sacred mission to discharge. That you will be worthy of it I do not doubt. God bless you all.18

The sharp of hearing may catch the low tone of Mr. Saint Laurent, Prime Minister of Canada, saying in his clipped style, “Very good,” and Churchill’s modest rejoinder, “I did my best to keep it going.”

In that epoch collaboration between Britain and Canada in many contexts—the Commonwealth, the Colombo Plan, NATO—counted for a great deal. The British economy revived; the atomic bomb was successfully tested; Stalin died, un lamented outside the admittedly numerous ranks of the gullible; French forces lost ground in Indo-China; the British still played a substantial, and sometimes independent, role in the world. When Churchill paid his last visit to Washington as Prime Minister in the summer of 1954, a few weeks short of his 80th birthday, he did his best to minimise the sharp differences of view which had emerged over Indo-China and urged upon President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles the need for talks with the Russians.

This latter purpose at least could be openly avowed during the brief visit to Ottawa which followed. Churchill was desperate to get on terms if some tolerable truce could be reached; or at the very least to show that everything possible had been done before the prospect of another war, more devastating than the last, had to be faced. His reasoning was very like that of Chamberlain in 1938. When he presented the argument at Bermuda in December, 1953, Eisenhower had declared that Russia was a harlot, whatever dress she might wear; America intended to drive this whore off her beat into the back streets.19 Six months later, the President’s line proved less absolute.

Because the recording of Churchill’s lengthy press conference in Ottawa has survived, we can listen to his unrehearsed explanation of what he called his policy of double-dealing:

People say to me, aren’t you asking to have it both ways? Well, I am trying to have it both ways. I think when two things hang together, as they do, there is no harm in trying to have things both ways. In fact, you won’t get them any other way than having them together. Peace through strength means that you will keep a friendly alternative before the eyes of your principal opponents….the Russians might very likely be content to have a good time instead of another phase of torture and slaughter….They haven’t had much of a good time, the people of Russia, with whom I have no quarrel—never had, always great sympathy—but I assure you if the capitalist democracies had to go through the sort of life they have to lead, there would be lots to talk about at the general elections which would occur.20 >>
That is delightfully put. We discern that Churchill conceived not only of a North Atlantic triangle but of a rectangle, because of France. It was doubly appropriate to say so in the presence of a Prime Minister of French Canadian descent. When Churchill talked of a “confraternity,” he meant not only NATO but the Commonwealth. All that was public property; but there was one piece of deeply concealed business: without the assistance of Canada, Britain could not manufacture the hydrogen bomb. It would be comic to record, were it not sad, that the Prime Minister of Great Britain learned of the American testing of the hydrogen bomb from a report in *The Manchester Guardian* in February, 1954. He immediately rang the Secretary of the Cabinet, the Foreign Secretary and the three Chiefs of Staff, none of whom knew of this momentous event. “It’s lucky that at least one person in Whitehall reads the newspapers,” Churchill observed.  

Before arriving in Canada, Churchill and his ministers had decided that Britain must make a hydrogen bomb. Since the U.S. would share neither expertise nor materials, much turned upon Canada. On 29 June, Churchill dined with Prime Minister Saint Laurent and C.D. Howe, now Minister of Defence Production. John Colville recorded: “A most secret subject discussed with apparent success”; when he came to edit this document thirty years afterwards, Colville imagined the subject to be the American threat to use atomic weapons in Korea. In reality, the deadly question was whether Canada would supply Britain with tritium. The Canadian Cabinet agreed the next day.

The Canada with which Churchill had made acquaintance more than half a century before, with a tiny population, much of it poverty-stricken, unsure of its capacity to sustain an independent existence, had become a country playing a leading part in international affairs, a major trading and industrial power, the help of which was now indispensable to the manufacture of fearsome weapons.

With deep reluctance and behind schedule, Churchill drove to the airport outside Ottawa. A large crowd sang “For he’s a jolly good fellow.” Lord Moran recorded that the Canadians regarded Churchill as belonging to them, and had a feeling that they might never see him again—that he had descended out of history to say goodbye.

A politician cast in conventional mould might have remarked at Rockcliffe that night, “We have exchanged views frankly with the government of Canada and are grateful for the understanding attitude which we invariably find here.” Not Churchill.

Openly emotional, a showman and an artist striving for effect, he printed his distinctive stamp upon the last words he spoke in Canada:

> It has been a short but wonderful visit and I can’t begin to tell you how much I have enjoyed it. As an aged Privy Councillor I have been honoured to sit with your Cabinet and [he added with a touch of mock solemnity] can report they take their responsibilities most seriously. I am very proud to be in the rare position of a Canadian Privy Councillor, enjoying Cabinet confidences. Canada is playing a great part in today’s world under your remarkable and distinguished Prime Minister. Canada stands high in influence and authority in the councils of the nations. I know you will continue playing your part in keeping bright the shield of freedom and justice.

That is what Canada has done: in NATO, the UN, the Commonwealth and above all in peace-keeping operations the world over. *FH*’s readership contains many distinguished Canadians. I hope they will allow me to say what is felt by countless people in Britain and America, but too seldom expressed: “Thank you a thousand times.”

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23. Moran, 570.
Mr. Speaker, Members of the Senate and Members of the House of Commons, it is with feelings of pride and encouragement that I find myself here in the House of Commons of Canada, invited to address the Parliament of the senior Dominion of the Crown. I am very glad to see again my old friend Mr. Mackenzie King, for fifteen out of twenty years your Prime Minister, and I thank him for the all too complimentary terms in which he has referred to myself. I bring you, Mr. Speaker, the assurance of good will and affection from everyone in the Motherland. We are most grateful for all you have done in the common cause, and we know that you are resolved to do whatever more is possible as the need arises and as opportunity serves. [Applause] Canada, Sir, occupies a unique position in the British Empire because of its unbreakable ties with Britain and its ever-growing friendship and intimate association with the United States. [Applause] Canada is a potent magnet, drawing together those in the new world and in the old whose fortunes are now united in a deadly struggle for life and honour against the common foe. The contribution of Canada to the Imperial war effort in troops, in ships, in aircraft, in food, and in finance has been magnificent. 

“On the evening of the 28th, Dr. Wilson’s cardiac case departed for Ottawa by train to address the Canadian Parliament and similarly not exert himself until New Year’s Eve....It may have been some consolation to Wilson as he and Churchill boarded their Washington-bound train on the evening of the 31st that, even if Canada had not been exactly restful for his patient, it at least had served as a tonic.”

—Robert Pilpel, Churchill in America, 1976

The Canadian Army now stationed in England has chafed not to have been in contact with the enemy. But I am here to tell you that it has stood and still stands in the key position to strike at the invader should he land upon our shores. [Applause] In a few months, when the invasion season returns, the Canadian Army may be engaged in one of the most frightful battles the world has ever seen; on the other hand, their presence may help to deter the enemy from attempting to fight such a battle on British soil. Although, Sir, the long routine of training and preparation is undoubtedly trying to men who left prosperous farms and businesses, or other responsible civil work, inspired by an eager and ardent desire to fight the enemy, although this is trying to high-minded tempers, the value of the service rendered is unquestionable, and the peculiar kind of self-sacrifice involved will, I am sure, be cheerfully or at least patiently endured.

Sir, the Canadian Government have imposed no limitations upon the use of the Canadian Army, whether upon the Continent of Europe or elsewhere, and I think it extremely unlikely that this war will end without the Canadian Army coming to close quarters with the Germans, as their fathers did at Ypres, on the Somme, or on the Vimy Ridge. [Applause] Already at Hong Kong, that beautiful colony which the industry and mercantile enterprise of Britain had raised from a desert isle and made the greatest port of shipping in the whole world—at Hong Kong, that Colony wrested from us for a time until we reach the peace table, by the overwhelming power of the Home Forces of Japan, to which it lay in proximity—at Hong Kong, Canadian soldiers of the Royal Rifles of Canada and the Winnipeg Grenadiers, under a brave officer whose loss we mourn, have played a valuable part in gaining precious days, and have crowned with honour, with military honour the reputation of their native land. [Applause]

Another major contribution made by Canada to the Imperial war effort is the wonderful and gigantic Empire training scheme for pilots for the Royal and Imperial Air Forces. This has now been, as you know well, in full career for nearly two years under conditions free from all interference by the enemy. The daring youth of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, with many thousands from the Homeland, are perfecting their training under the best conditions, and we are being assisted on a large scale by the United States, many of whose training facilities have been placed at our disposal. This scheme will provide us in 1942 and 1943 with the highest class of trained pilots, observers and air gunners in the numbers necessary to man the enormous flow of aircraft which the factories of Britain, of the Empire and of the United States are and will be producing.

I could, Sir, speak also on the naval production of corvettes and above all of merchant ships which is proceeding on a scale almost equal to the building of the United Kingdom, all of which Canada has set on foot. I could speak of many other activities, of tanks, of the special forms of modern high-velocity cannon, of the great supplies of raw materials and many other elements essential to our war effort on which your labours are ceaselessly and tirelessly engaged. But I must not let my address to you become a catalogue, so I turn to less technical fields of thought.

Sir, we did not make this war, we did not seek it. We did all we could to avoid it. We did too much to avoid it. [Applause] We went so far in trying to avoid it as to be almost destroyed by it when it broke upon us.
But that dangerous corner has been turned, and with every month and every year that passes we shall confront the evil-doers with weapons as plentiful, as sharp, and as destructive as those with which they have sought to establish their hateful domination.

I should like to point out to you, Mr. Speaker, that we have not at any time asked for any mitigation in the fury or malice of the enemy.

The peoples of the British Empire may love peace. They do not seek the lands or wealth of any country, but they are a tough and hardy lot. We have not journeyed all this way across the centuries, across the oceans, across the mountains, across the prairies, because we are made of sugar candy. [Applause]

Look at the Londoners, the Cockneys; look what they have stood up to. Grim and gay with their cry, “We can take it,” and their war-time mood, “What’s good enough for anybody is good enough for us.”

We have not asked that the rules of the game should be modified. We shall never descend to the German and Japanese level, but if anybody likes to play rough we can play rough, too. [Applause] Hitler and his Nazi gang have sown the wind; let them reap the whirlwind. Neither the length of the struggle nor any form of severity which it may assume will make us weary or will make us quit.

I have been all this week with the President of the United States [applause], that great man [applause] whom destiny has marked for this climax of human fortune. We have been concerting the united pacts and resolves of more than thirty states and nations to fight on in unity together and in fidelity one with another, without any thought except the total and final extirpation of the Hitler tyranny, of the Japanese frenzy, and the Mussolini flop. [Applause]

There will be no halting, or half measures, there will be no compromise, or parley. These gangs of bandits have sought to darken the light of the world, have sought to stand between the common people of all the lands and their march forward into their inheritance. They shall themselves be cast into the pit of death and shame, and only when the earth has been cleansed and purged of their crimes and of their villainies will we turn from the task which they have forced upon us, a task which we were reluctant to undertake, but which we shall now most faithfully and punctiliously discharge. [Applause] Mr. Speaker, this is no time, according to my sense of proportion, this is no time to speak of the hopes of the future, or of the broader world which lies beyond our struggles and our victory. We have to win that world for our children. We have to win it by our sacrifices. We have not won it yet. The crisis is upon us. The power of the enemy is immense. If we were in any way to underrate the strength, the resources or the ruthless savagery of that enemy, we should jeopardize, not only our lives, for they will be offered freely, but the cause of human freedom and progress to which we have vowed ourselves and all we have. We cannot, Sir, for a moment afford to relax. On the contrary, we must drive ourselves forward with unrelenting zeal.

In this strange, terrible World War, there is a place for everyone, man and woman, old and young, bale and balt; service in a thousand forms is open. There is no room now for the dilettante, for the weakling, for the shirker, for the sluggard.

The mines, the factory, the dockyard, the salt sea waves, the fields to till, the home, the hospital, the chair of the scientist, the pulpits of the preacher—from the highest to the humblest tasks, all are of equal honour; all have their part to play. The enemies ranged against us, coalesced and combined against us, have asked for total war. Let us make sure they get it. [Applause]

That grand old minstrel, Harry Lauder—Sir Harry Lauder, I should say, and no honour was better deserved—had a song in the last War which began, “If we all look back to the history of the past, we can just tell where we are.” Let us then look back. Sir, we plunged into this war all unprepared because we had pledged our word to stand by the side of Poland, which Hitler had feloniously invaded, and in spite of a gallant resistance had soon struck down. There followed that astonishing seven months which were called on this side of the Atlantic the “phony” war. Suddenly the explosion of pent-up German strength and preparation burst upon Norway, Denmark, Holland and Belgium. All these absolutely blameless neutrals, to most of whom Germany up to the last moment was giving every kind of guarantee and assurance, were overrun and trampled down.

The hideous massacre of Rotterdam, where 30,000 >>

“HAVING COMPLETED THE OUTLINE OF THE OTTAWA SPEECH, HE HAD PUT IT ASIDE...ON THE EVENING BEFORE HE HAD TO DELIVER IT NOT A WORD WAS ON PAPER. SUPERHUMAN EFFORTS BY HIS STAFF AND THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL’S TYPISTS PRODUCED THE FINAL VERSION IN TIME, BUT THEN, AT THE VERY LAST MINUTE, THE PM DECIDED TO SCRAP ONE ENTIRE PAGE AND DICTATE A FRESH PASSAGE...HE HAD ALREADY BEGUN HIS ADDRESS WHEN THE MISSING SHEET WAS SLIPPED INTO HIS HAND.”

—Gerald Pawle, The War and Colonel Warden, 1963

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people perished, showed the ferocious barbarism in which the German Air Force revels when, as in Warsaw and later in Belgrade, it was able to bomb practically undefended cities.

On top of all this came the great French catastrophe. The French Army collapsed, and the French nation was dashed into utter and, as it has proved so far, irretrievable confusion. The French Government had at their own suggestion solemnly bound themselves with us not to make a separate peace. It was their duty and it was also their interest to go to North Africa, where they would have been at the head of the French Empire. In Africa, with our aid, they would have had overwhelming sea power. They would have had the recognition of the United States and the use of all the gold they had lodged beyond the seas. If they had done this, Italy might have been driven out of the war before the end of 1940, and France would have held her place as a nation in the councils of the Allies and at the conference table of the victors. But their generals misled them.

*When I warned them that Britain would fight on alone whatever they did, their generals told their Prime Minister and his divided Cabinet, “In three weeks England will have her neck wrung like a chicken.” Some chicken! [Applause] Some neck! [Applause]*

What a contrast has been the behaviour of the valiant, stout-hearted Dutch [applause], who still stand forth as a strong living partner in the struggle! Their venerated Queen and Government are in England; their Princess and her children have found asylum and protection here in your midst. [Applause] But the Dutch nation are defending their Empire with dogged courage and tenacity by land and sea and in the air. Their submarines are inflicting a heavy daily toll upon the Japanese robbers who have come across the seas to steal the wealth of the East Indies, and ravage and exploit its fertility and its civilization. The British Empire and the United States are going to the aid of the Dutch. We are going to fight out this new war against Japan together. [Applause] We have suffered together and we shall conquer together. [Applause]

But the men of Bordeaux, the men of Vichy, they would do nothing like this. They lay prostrate at the foot of the conqueror. They fawned upon him. What have they got out of it? The fragment of France which was left to them is just as powerless, just as hungry, and even more miserable because more divided, than the occupied regions themselves. Hitler plays from day to day a cat-and-mouse game with these troubled men. One day he will charge them a little less for holding their countrymen down. Another day he will let out a few thousand broken prisoners of war from the million and a half or million and three-quarter he has collected. Or again he will shoot a hundred French hostages to give them a taste of the lash. On these blows and favours the Vichy Government have been content to live from day to day. But even this will not go on indefinitely. At any moment it may suit Hitler’s plans to brush them away. Their only guarantee is Hitler’s good faith, which, as everyone knows, biteth like the adder and stingeth like the asp. [Applause]

Some Frenchmen there were who would not bow their knees and who, under General de Gaulle, have continued the fight on the side of the Allies. [Applause] They have been condemned to death by the men of Vichy, but their names will be held and are being held in increasing respect by nine Frenchmen out of every ten throughout the once happy, smiling land of France. [Applause] But now, Sir, strong forces are at hand. The tide has turned against the Hun. Britain, which the men of Bordeaux thought and then hoped would soon be finished, Britain with her Empire around her carried the weight of the war alone for a whole long year through the darkest part of the valley. She is growing stronger every day. [Applause] You can see it here in Canada. Anyone who has the slightest knowledge of our affairs is aware that very soon we shall be superior in every
form of equipment to those who have taken us at the disadvantage of being but half-armed. [Applause]

The Russian armies, under their warrior leader [applause], Josef Stalin, are waging furious war with increasing success along the thousand-mile front of their invaded country. General Auchinleck, at the head of a British, South African, New Zealand and Indian army, is striking down and mopping up the German and Italian forces who had attempted the invasion of Egypt. [Applause]

Not only, Sir, are they being mopped up in the desert, but great numbers of them have been drowned on the way there by the British submarines and the Royal Air Force in which Australian squadrons played their part.

As I speak this afternoon, an important battle is being fought around Jedabia. We must not attempt to prophesy its result, but I have good confidence. Sir, all this fighting in Libya proves that when our men have equal weapons in their hands and proper support from the air they are more than a match for the Nazi hordes. [Applause]

In Libya, as in Russia, events of great importance and of most hopeful import have taken place. But, greatest of all, the mighty Republic of the United States has entered the conflict, and entered it in a manner which shows that for her there can be no withdrawal except [applause] by death or victory.

Sir, we may observe three main periods or phases in the struggle that lies before us. First there is the period of consolidation, of combination, and of final preparation. In this period, which will certainly be marked by much heavy fighting, we shall still be gathering our strength, resisting the assaults of the enemy, and acquiring the necessary overwhelming air superiority and shipping tonnage to give our armies the power to traverse, in whatever numbers may be necessary, the seas and oceans which, except in the case of Russia, separate us from our foes. It is only when the vast shipbuilding programme on which the United States has already made so much progress, and which you are powerfully aiding, comes into full flood that we shall be able to bring the whole force of our manhood and of our modern scientific equipment to bear upon the enemy. How long this period will take depends upon the vehemence of the effort put into production in all our war industries and shipyards.

The second phase, Sir, which will then open may be called the phase of liberation. During this phase we must look to the recovery of the territories which have been lost or which may yet be lost, and also we must look to the revolt of the conquered peoples from the moment that >>
the rescuing and liberating armies and air forces appear in strength within their bounds. For this purpose it is imperative that no nation or region overrun, that no Government or State which has been conquered, should relax its moral and physical efforts and preparation for the day of deliverance. The invaders, be they Germans or Japanese, must everywhere be regarded as infected persons to be shunned and isolated as far as possible. Where active resistance is impossible, passive resistance must be maintained.

The invaders and tyrants must be made to feel that their fleeting triumphs will have a terrible reckoning, and that they are hunted men and that their cause is doomed. Particular punishment will be reserved for the quislings and traitors [applause] who make themselves the tools of the enemy. They will be handed over to the judgment of their fellow-countrymen.

Sir, there is a third phase which must also be contemplated, namely, the assault upon the citadels and home-lands of the guilty Powers both in Europe and in Asia. Thus I endeavour in a few words to cast some forward light upon the dark, inscrutable mysteries of the future. But in thus forecasting the course along which we should seek to advance, we must never forget that the power of the enemy and the action of the enemy may at every stage affect our fortunes. Moreover, Sir, you will notice that I have not attempted to assign any time-limits to the various phases. These time-limits depend upon our exertions, and upon our achievements, and on the hazardous and uncertain course of the war.

Nevertheless, I feel it is right at this moment to make it clear that, while an ever-increasing bombing offensive against Germany will remain one of the principal methods by which we hope to bring the war to an end, it is by no means the only method which our growing strength now enables us to take into account. Evidently the most strenuous exertions must be made by all. As to the form which these exertions take, that is for each partner in the Grand Alliance to judge for himself in consultation with others and in harmony with the general scheme.

Let us then, Sir, address ourselves to our task, not in any way underrating its tremendous difficulties and perils, but in good heart and sober confidence, resolved that, whatever the cost, whatever the suffering, we shall stand by one another, true and faithful comrades, and do our duty, God helping us, to the end. [Applause]
“The Heartbeat of the Soul”

Cover Story: The Portraits That Changed My Life

I was in my darkroom when the telephone call came. After I had hung up the receiver I sat for a long time looking out the window, hardly seeing the bright December sunshine splashing across the sill.

The call was from the office of Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King who, over the years, had become my patron and friend. Winston Churchill would be in Ottawa shortly to address the combined Houses of Parliament. And I had been invited to take his portrait.

I was thrilled at the prospect of photographing such a giant at this crucial stage in history. At that time in 1941, I was a relatively unknown photographer who principally made portraits of women.

Women: I smiled in recollection as my thoughts went back to my boyhood in Armenia, when we children would sit at my mother’s knee as she read the Bible to us. God’s promises were the only good things we had in those days in the early 1900s when Christian Armenians suffered under the persecution of the Turks. My mother helped us even through that.

One day after school some Turkish children stoned me.

With a bleeding forehead, I ran home crying to my mother. “Tomorrow,” I said, “I will throw the stones!” Mother drew me close. “My son,” she said, “if you must throw a stone in self-defense, be sure you miss.”

Love and forgiveness were lessons we were taught early. We also learned that God had a purpose for each of us. And if we tried to live close to Him through compassion for others, we would be guided to our true destiny. The persecution in Armenia intensified. I saw relatives massacred; my sister died of starvation as we were driven from village to village.

Then light shone for me in the form of my uncle, George Nakash, who offered to bring me to Canada. I went there with a dream of studying medicine. After twenty-nine days in steerage I finally arrived, an awkward 15-year-old who knew little English and thus was placed in the fourth grade. But I found love and understanding from fellow students who not only gave me marbles and encouraged me to play with them, but even made sure that I won. I was astonished and grateful. It was then that my love affair with Canada began.

In the meantime I was helping Uncle George, who was a photographer. For a birthday present he gave me a Brownie camera. Delighted with my new toy, I wandered out to >>

Yousuf Karsh OC (1908-2002) an Honorary Member of ICS Canada, was one of the world’s greatest photographers. His article, which first appeared in Guideposts in August 1974, was first published in Finest Hour 94 by kind permission of the author and his representatives, Jerry Fielder and Woodfin Kemp. We are deeply grateful to Terry Reardon, whose diligence and perseverance with the Ottawa archives produced for the first time all seven Karsh photos taken after Churchill’s historic speech.
take some pictures. I was entranced by a group of delighted children tumbling on a pile of hay. Inwardly my spirit laughed with them and I snapped the joyful scene. I gave a print of it to a friend for Christmas. Without my knowing, he entered it in a Toronto photo contest, where it won first prize.

Uncle George, perceiving my growing interest in studying photography seriously, sent me to his friend John Garo, a photographer in Boston, where I worked as an apprentice. Garo was famous, and many prominent musicians, artists, journalists and statesmen came to his studio where, after sittings, they remained to visit.

I hung around in the background and listened, enthralled, to the rich conversations of men like Arthur Fiedler, Serge Koussevitzky and Charles Francis Adams. I learned that appreciating the fullness of life is more than sharpening one’s professional skill—that it is immersing oneself in others, learning their thoughts and aspirations.

By the time I moved to Ottawa to open my own studio, I had dedicated myself to photographing those who left their mark on the world. But more than making an image of a person’s face, I now endeavoured to capture a living essence, hoping to reveal an inner life. One did not do this by simply squeezing a shutter. I found that I had to get to know the subject; it was like a physician diagnosing a patient. To be effective, I learned that the subject must become the only person in my life at that hour.

In a sense, my original desire to be a physician was fulfilled. For the sitter must emotionally reveal his true self, as a patient does to a trusted physician in the consultation room. In getting the subject to drop his armour, you catch the heartbeat of the soul.

This became my calling—whether it was a young soldier photographed before he left for war, a mother who wished her children to have a remembrance, or a girl wanting something of herself for her fiancé, on each I concentrated all my energy and attention. After all, the Lord said, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do; do it with thy might.”

By now the sunshine had left my studio window and I snapped out of my reverie. Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of a country, like mine, already two long years at war, had flew to the United States after the attack on Pearl Harbor. He would arrive soon in Ottawa.

I had little time to prepare.

Mackenzie King had invited me to come to the Speaker’s Chamber and set up my equipment the night before but, more important, he had also invited me to be present to hear the great man speak.

“When Churchill finishes,” said Mr. King, “I will bring him directly to you.”

After a sleepless night I hurried over to Parliament where I joined the audience and listened to Churchill give one of his most inspiring speeches. Caught up in the rumbling thunder of his prose, I leaned forward, responding to his bold call for courage. Then, during the enthusiastic roar of applause following the speech, I went across the hall to the Speaker’s Chamber. I waited anxiously.

Soon I heard the approach of many feet and the murmur of voices. I switched on the floodlights. The group halted outside; Mr. King, walking arm-in-arm with Churchill, ushered him into the room. Churchill stood there defiantly, his bulldog-like face bristling with surprise. “What’s going on?” he demanded.
His entourage started to laugh. From their faces I could see that no one among them had thought to inform him about the photographs. That did not make my task any easier. I bowed respectfully, quaking inside. “Sir, I hope to be fortunate enough to make a worthy photograph of this historic occasion.”

“Why wasn’t I told?” he barked, chewing vigorously on his cigar. Everyone looked at the floor; no one answered. Finally Churchill turned to me. “All right,” he conceded, “you may take one.”

He reluctantly followed me to where my lights and camera were set up. I offered him an ash tray for his cigar but he pointedly ignored it, his eyes boring into mine.

At the camera, I made sure everything was in focus, closed the lens and stood up, my hand ready to squeeze the shutter release, when something made me hesitate. Then suddenly, with a strange boldness, almost as if it were an unconscious act, I stepped forward and said, “Forgive me, sir.” Without premeditation, I reached up and removed the cigar from his mouth.

His jaw tightened in belligerence; his eyes blazed. I clicked the shutter.

Then he relaxed.

“All right,” he grunted as he assumed a more benign attitude, “you may take another one.”

In just a few minutes he stood up, strode across the room, shook my hand and said, “You can even make a roaring lion stand still to be photographed.” Then he was gone.

I hurried to my studio with the film of the shots. With the first I wasn’t exactly sure of what I would have; I had hopes for the second one. In the darkness of the lab, I waited as anxiously as a father expecting his first child. But I wasn’t quite prepared for the words of the technician as she watched the image materialize: “This is a triumph!”

There, glowing from the still wet emulsion, was the resolute determination of a man who was to lead his people to victory. Of course it was the first shot I had taken.

Within weeks it appeared throughout the free world, and eventually on the cover of Life. Edward R. Murrow, the CBS war correspondent, wrote when he saw it, “Ah, here is the face which marshaled the English language and sent it into battle when we had little else.”

Since then it has been my privilege to photograph many world leaders in all phases of endeavour. I have tried, every time, to capture the person when he is most himself.

I remember the face of Gamal Abdel Nasser, stern and impassive, until the musical voices of his children at play in the courtyard drifted through the window—then his face softened into that of a loving father.

Once in Connecticut, I was photographing Marian Anderson when her accompanist arrived for a rehearsal.

“Play the music for the Crucifixion,” I whispered. At the sound of the first chords, the great contralto forgot about the camera and began to sing. In that instant the camera caught the deep faith of that compassionate artist.

Many times I think back to the portrait of Churchill which changed my life. Was it a lucky accident? I don’t think so. For I believe that when one approaches the work that God has given him with faith and dedication, God is always close by.

Top left to lower right: Karsh 1, the “Angry Lion,” was the photographer’s great masterpiece. Karsh 2, the “Smiling Lion” (cover, FH 94, Spring 1997), has been seen less often. Karsh 3, the first with King, first ran in His Greatest Years (Toronto: Swann, 1965), then in FH 94. Rebecca Lessor reported Karsh 4 in FH 150. The last three, Karsh 5, 6 and 7, have never before been published.
August 1942:

Winston Churchill and the Raid on Dieppe

“The People Who Planned It Should Be Shot”

TERRY REARDON
The entry of the United States into World War II was seen by Churchill as a guarantee that the Allies would win, but in early 1942 that outcome was far from assured. On the Eastern Front the Russian Army was hard-pressed to withstand the German onslaught which threatened Moscow. Stalin appealed (or to be more correct demanded) an immediate second front in Europe arguing that this would cause substantial German forces in Russia to be moved west.

Meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov in May 1942, President Roosevelt, concerned that the Russians might make a separate peace with Germany, promised Molotov that he “expected” to launch a second front that year. Churchill and his Chiefs of Staff were convinced that an invasion of Northern France was not practical at that time. Because there were insufficient troops and inadequate landing craft, such a move, they thought, would fail.

Roosevelt’s generals came to the same conclusion, and he ultimately agreed, accepting Churchill’s recommendation of an invasion of North Africa later in the year. Churchill flew to Moscow in August 1942 to give the unpleasant news to Stalin, who, not unexpectedly, was furious. However, he was somewhat placated by Churchill’s promise of a major operation in northern France very shortly.

Churchill was referring to a raid on the French Channel port of Dieppe. While one objective was to take pressure off Russia, the official reason for the raid was to prepare for D-Day, the invasion of France. There having been no amphibious assault since Gallipoli in 1915, the Western Allies needed to develop experience of modern conditions—including the capture of a major port capable of use for the transport of men, supplies and vehicles, including tanks.

The official Canadian war history covers the reason for a frontal attack on the town: “…it was feared that an attempt to ‘pinch out’ a port by landings on its flanks might produce delays which would give the enemy time to demolish the harbour, whereas if the place could be seized by a blow into the centre the problem would be solved.”

Besides the attack on Dieppe proper, the plan included two nearby infantry movements to secure an airfield. Simultaneously, parachute troops would drop to attack the German divisional headquarters and the coastal and anti-aircraft batteries in the area. To support the mission, a heavy bomber attack was planned against the town and the airfield on the night before the early morning landings.

The choice of troops for the operation was a “no-brainer.” The Canadian army had been inactive so far in the war, and when Montgomery approached the Canadian...
Army Chief, General McNaughton, for a division to form the main part of the force, the response was positive.

At a meeting on 5 June 1942 the plan for heavy air bombardment was dropped for concern that it might put the Germans on the alert. Alternatively, Boulogne was to be bombed as a diversionary tactic. Also later, it was decided to substitute commandos for paratroopers.

Training for the operation was conducted on the Dorset coast, where the terrain resembled the Dieppe area. A mock exercise went badly: units landed miles off-target, and the tank landing craft arrived over an hour late. Further training was required and the next exercise, on 22-23 June, showed improvement, although certain defects occurred, particularly on the naval side. Montgomery gave a written report in which he expressed confidence that the operation would succeed. He included a P.S.: “The Canadians are 1st Class chaps; if anyone can pull it off, they will.”

Churchill had concerns with the operation and called for a conference for 30 June. He asked the Head of Combined Operations, Lord Louis Mountbatten, whether he could “guarantee success,” to which Mountbatten “naturally replied that he could not.” However Mountbatten’s second in command, Vice-Admiral Hughes-Hallett, who had trained in disguise with the Canadian troops, assured Churchill that they would “fight like hell.”

General Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, also gave the plan his support, advising Churchill that the Dieppe operation was an indispensable preliminary to a major French invasion. Based on the opinions expressed, Churchill gave his approval. The enterprise was to be launched on 3 July, but continuing bad weather put it off.

A key element of the plan was secrecy, which could not be maintained with many thousands involved, so the operation was cancelled.

In August, the military command decided to re-launch the campaign, given that the troops were already trained and could be taken straight to the ships, reducing the risk of the Germans detecting a large force in advance. Planners also believed the Germans, who would undoubtedly by then have known of the July plan, would not expect another operation against the same target. Montgomery had now been transferred to North Africa; his replacement was the Commanding Officer of the Second Canadian Division, General Harry Crerar, with Major-General John Hamilton Roberts the actual army commander. Unbeknown to the Allies, the Germans remained on full alert during the summer of 1942, although there is no evidence that they knew Dieppe had been targeted.

On the evening of 18 August, the ships set sail, only to be spotted en route by a German convoy making its way from Boulogne to Dieppe. A battle ensued, the firing alerting German troops on shore. Surprise, a key element of the operation, had been lost. Problems next arose when the Navy disembarked some troops at incorrect locations, from which they were unable to carry out their objectives.

The forces defending the port were much heavier than had been expected. Tanks had trouble proceeding on the pebbled shore. General Roberts, commanding the operation, lost wireless connection with his forces. Based on fragmentary information that the first wave was successful, he ordered a second wave ashore. While some of the first wave did reach the town, the bulk of forces were tied down on the beach or killed or wounded. It was soon apparent that the key mission, to take Dieppe and destroy the port facilities, was not achievable. The troops withdrew under terrific German fire from the cliffs around the port, which caused more deaths and woundings.
It was a disaster. Of the 4963 Canadian troops engaged, only 2104 returned to England, many of whom were wounded; 913 were killed and 1946 captured. Heavy losses were also recorded by the other forces involved.

On September 8th, Churchill in his official statement to the House Commons made the best of it: “The raid must be considered as a reconnaissance in force....We had to get all the information necessary before launching operations on a much larger scale....I, personally, regarded the Dieppe assault, to which I gave my sanction, as an indispensable preliminary to full-scale operations.”

Privately, however, Churchill was concerned over the operation. In a minute to Chief of Staff Major General Ismay on 21 December 1942 he wrote: “At first sight it would appear to a layman very much out of accord with the accepted principles of war to attack the strongly fortified town front without first securing the cliffs on either side, and to use our tanks in a frontal assault off the beaches.”

Churchill wanted Ismay to ascertain the facts, after which he would decide whether to hold a more formal inquiry.

Ismay’s reply included a report from Mountbatten, laying responsibility on Montgomery, Monty was in North Africa at the time of the raid. Churchill did not pursue the matter at that time, but after the war, preparing his memoirs, he asked Ismay for a full explanation, including those responsible for reauthorizing the raid in August.

Ismay was unable to find the evidence and surmised that for secrecy reasons nothing had been put in writing. He did report: “I can now recall the fury of General Nye, then V.C.I.G.S. [in the absence of General Brooke, accompanying Churchill in Cairo], who had no idea that the operation was on until reports started to flow in from the scene of the action.” Ismay also noted that Churchill must have approved the plan in principle, because he cabled from Cairo two days before the raid using its codeword.

Ismay went on to contact Mountbatten and Hughes-Hallett, about the authorization of the August plan, but they could not help. So Churchill provided his own account of the operation, including the statement that it was Mountbatten who had revived the operation, without approval of the Chiefs of Staff, or the War Cabinet Defence Committee. Understandably Mountbatten was alarmed at Churchill’s re-draft and he provided a voluminous response, which Ismay supported, on the basis that he had no recollection of the specifics.

The historian David Reynolds, who limned all these postwar ruminations in his account of the writing of the War Memoirs, concludes that Churchill had by now lost interest and accepted Mountbatten’s account: “The Hinge of Fate >>
therefore prints Mountbatten’s self-serving answers, not Churchill’s soul-searching questions.” They went like this:

Our postwar knowledge of German records shows that they did not have any special warning about Dieppe through leakage. However, their general estimate of the threat to the Dieppe sector led to the intensification of defence measures along the whole front....Looking back, the casualties of this memorable action may seem out of proportion to the results. It would be wrong to judge the episode solely by such a standard. Dieppe occupies a place of its own in the story of the war. 

It is ironic that one of the most imaginative ideas of World War II, the floating Mulberry Harbour, assured that there was no need to take Dieppe on D-Day. One such floating harbour, at Omaha beach, was destroyed in a storm, but the other at Arromanches, named Port Winston, saw heavy use, landing over 2.5 million men, 500,000 vehicles and four million tons of supplies.

While mistakes were made in the execution of the plan itself, the failure was partly owed to flawed intelligence reports. The attackers grossly underestimated the strength of the German garrison, and did not consider that the towering cliffs in the headlands made perfect gun nests, which gave the enemy easy pickings among invasion forces. True, Mountbatten was a sailor, with a swashbuckling attitude; but experienced soldiers such as Brooke and Montgomery also bought into the plan, which led to Churchill’s sanction—which he questioned soon afterwards.

Few historians believe that the raid on Dieppe was anything other than an illogical, flawed plan with disastrous results. Canadian historian Pierre Berton wrote: “How ironic it is that for Canadians the defining battle of the Great War was a glorious victory [ Vimy Ridge], while its counterpart, twenty-five years later, was a bitter defeat.”

Three soldiers involved in the raid were awarded the Victoria Cross. The last word is left to one of them, Captain Patrick Porteous, quoted in his obituary in the Toronto Globe and Mail of 16 October 2000: “The people who planned it should be shot.”

Endnotes

1. Contention exists over what Roosevelt promised. The official transcript (http://bit.ly/yzn79W) reads: “The President then put to General Marshall the query whether the U.S. was preparing a second front. ‘Yes,’ replied the General. The President then authorized Mr. Molotov to inform Mr. Stalin that we expect the formation of a second front this year.” (Italics ours.) “Preventing” or “expect” are not definite. Nor was Stalin so told: Molotov’s summary to Stalin quoted FDR as saying, “This is our hope. This is our wish.” See Oleg Rzheshchovsky, War and Diplomacy: The Making of the Grand Alliance (Abingdon, Oxon.: Taylor & Breach, 1996), 179-80, 185-87, 204-06, 219.


3. Ibid., 335.

4. Ibid., 337.


7. Ibid., 356.

8. Ibid., 348.


Encounters with Canadians 1900-1955

With the defeat of Stanley Baldwin’s government in 1929, Winston Churchill, though re-elected, seemed to be at the end of his political career. In newfound leisure he planned a lengthy journey throughout North America to lecture, promote his new book, The Aftermath, and write articles for the Daily Telegraph.

Canadians enthusiastically welcomed the former Chancellor of the Exchequer (often introduced as a “senior Empire statesman”). His lectures in Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa and other Canadian cities were well attended. The Ottawa Journal gave some indication of the warmth Canadians felt towards their famous visitor: “[He] is one of the stormy petrels of British politics. But Canadians can salute Mr. Churchill as somebody more than that. Journalist, author, soldier, politician, orator, Mr. Churchill is one of the most extraordinary, one of the most salient figures of our time, a man who has impressed his personality and genius not only upon the British Empire but upon the whole structure of the world.”

Reciprocating these feelings, Churchill wrote his wife from the Banff Springs Hotel in Alberta: “I have made up my mind that if N. Ch. is made leader of the CP or anyone else of that kind, I clear out of politics and see if I cannot make you and the kittens a little more comfortable before I die. Only one goal still attracts me, and if that were barred I shd quit the dreary field for pastures new….Darling, I am greatly attracted to this country. Immense developments are going forward. There are fortunes to be made in many directions. The tide is flowing strongly. However, the time to take decisions is not yet.”

Though Neville Chamberlain did win the leadership of the Conservative Party, Churchill remained in British politics—to the everlasting gratitude of people throughout the free world, including Canadians, who are still glad to remember that he was available in 1940 to lead the battle against the Nazis.

Churchill had first visited Canada in 1900 to lecture on his adventures in South Africa. His American audiences had been small and unenthusiastic, even...
hostile, and the anticipated income was disappointing. Audiences in Canada were larger and more welcoming, but by the time he got to Toronto he was blaming his promoter, Major J.B. Pond, “a vulgar Yankee impresario,” for making him speak to private dinner parties “like a conjurer”—and keeping a disproportionate share of the revenue.

When the news of the death of Queen Victoria “reached us at Winnipeg, this city far away among the snows—fourteen hundred miles from any British town of importance—began to hang its head and hoist half-masted flags.” On the day Europe’s royalty formed the Queen’s funeral procession, the young Winston sailed out of New York harbour, ready to resume a political career that would last as long as the Queen had ruled.

In America Churchill had met very important people, President McKinley and Mark Twain among them. In Canada, perhaps his most important contact was William Lyon Mackenzie King, the future Prime Minister. King called on Churchill, whom he found drinking champagne in mid-morning, and attended his lecture in Ottawa.

There had also been a personal event: while staying with Governor-General Lord Minto in Ottawa, Churchill had a reunion with Pamela Plowden, to whom he had once proposed. The flame was not rekindled, but he did tell his mother that “there is no doubt in my mind that she is the only woman I could ever live happily with.” Happily, a few years later, Clementine Hozier would change all that.

Churchill’s next significant contact with Canadian figures occurred at a conference of British and Colonial leaders in 1907 to discuss matters of common interest. Churchill was Under-Secretary for the Colonies and Canada was represented by its Prime Minister, Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

In 1911 Churchill was introduced to Max Aitken, the future Lord Beaverbrook, a Canadian millionaire who had made a fortune before moving to England to advance the cause of Empire unity through tariff reform. Aitken quickly learned enough about British politics to help obtain the leadership of the Conservative Party for his friend and fellow Canadian, Andrew Bonar Law.

Although Churchill and Beaverbrook disagreed over Imperial Preference, they did share a common interest in Imperial unity in the face of the growing threat from Germany. After Churchill became First Lord of the Admiralty the issue arose as to whether Canada should create her own navy (supported by Laurier’s Liberals) or make a donation towards the construction of dreadnoughts for the Royal Navy (supported by Sir Robert Borden’s Conservatives.) Beaverbrook strongly endorsed the Borden position and offered to make all the necessary contacts for Churchill to travel to Canada in order to convince the Canadian public to support their policy.

Party politics was at play in both countries and, not surprisingly, Beaverbrook was playing both sides. While he supported the Liberal Churchill’s military objectives, he did not want to hurt the Conservative Bonar Law’s political fortunes. So, while encouraging Churchill to go to Canada, Beaverbrook was working with his close friend and future...
Canadian Prime Minister R.B. Bennett to prevent that visit. Churchill did not go to the Dominion and war erupted before the matter was resolved in the Canadian Parliament.

The Canadian Government of Sir Robert Borden (1911-20) provided unstinting support for Britain during World War I and many Canadians met Churchill on the front, including future Governor-General Georges Vanier and Conservative leader George Drew. Future Prime Minister John Diefenbaker observed him in the House of Commons when Churchill returned from the battlefields in 1916.

By 1922 Canada was beginning to take a more independent stand on geopolitical matters and looked at every event with its own interests in mind. In 1922 its Prime Minister was Mackenzie King, and Churchill was Britain’s Colonial Secretary when the Government of Lloyd George requested Empire support against Turkey in the Chanak Crisis, occasioned by the massing of Turkish army troops before British and French military garrisons near Chanak.

Rather than providing unquestioned aid, the Canadian government requested “further information,” a stance that surprised Britain. The crisis was resolved before anything further developed, but it sent a strong message to the Mother Country that the Dominion was growing up.

Churchill’s 1929 journey across Canada was successful, but he did not pursue his whim of moving there. Instead he returned home focused on recouping his financial losses from the Wall Street stock market crash of October 1929. Thus, while visiting the United States in 1932, he could not decline an offer of $2500 from Simpsons, one of Canada’s leading department stores (now Sears), to lecture at Toronto’s Maple Leaf Gardens. Former Prime Minister Arthur Meighen presided and the 48th Highlanders’ Band played. Churchill stayed at the Royal York, which advertised itself as the largest hotel in the Empire.

In Ottawa Churchill again met the Liberal Mackenzie King, now Leader of the Opposition. King wrote in his diary that he “dreaded the venture but it turned out to be quite the most pleasant and profitable visit.” It was during the same visit that Canadians got an insight into Churchill’s “row” with Baldwin over the India Act, and learned that he “could not stand Ramsay [Macdonald]—never could.”

Memories were still raw in Canada over the “King-Byng Affair” in which Lord Byng, the Governor-General, had refused Mackenzie King’s request to call an election and had then invited Conservative Arthur Meighen to form a Government. He then granted Meighen’s request to call an election that King won. Churchill, while wanting to stay out of Canadian politics, privately shared the view of a later Governor General, Lord Beesborough, that Byng was right in refusing a dissolution to King, in that the latter recommended it at a time when Parl. was only eight months old; that he was right in calling upon Meighen to form an Administration; but that he was wrong in granting a dissolution to M. only a few days later, having refused it to King so short a time previously. Lord B. should have accepted Meighen’s resignation, and then, having sent for King again, should have granted to the latter his original request for a dissolution.

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Left to right: Conservative Robert Borden (Prime Minister, 1911-20) wanted a Canadian donation to the Royal Navy, while Liberal Wilfrid Laurier (Prime Minister, 1896-1911) argued instead for Canada’s own navy. Beaverbrook, outwardly pro-Borden, suggested Churchill go to Canada to make Borden’s case. Then, wary of Liberal challengers to his Tory friend Bonar Law in Britain, “The Beaver” conspired with R.B. Bennett (Prime Minister, 1930-35) to forestall Churchill’s mission.
Such was the respect of Canadian leaders for the now out-of-office British statesman that both King and Meighen met with WSC later to give him their sides of the story. Despite the ups and downs of his Wilderness Years, Churchill suffered no diminution in the affection of Canadians. Thus, when he came to power in 1940, there was a well of good-will and support for him.

World War II provided many opportunities for the continuation of a special relationship between Churchill and many Canadians. In November 1940 Canadian Defence Minister J.L. Ralston, accompanied by his assistant Richard Malone (later publisher of the Globe and Mail), visited Churchill to discuss how Canada could assist in the war effort. A question Ralston had earlier posed to Anthony Eden (“How in hell was Britain going to win the war?”) had already reached Churchill’s ears.

One evening after dinner, Churchill got up from the table and proceeded to answer Ralston’s question in very vigorous, free-swinging language as he marched around the table. At one point, he seized an orange from a plate on the table to illustrate his point. “We’ll Nam sos these bastards yet,” the Prime Minister growled (making a Churchillism of the name of the Norwegian port, target of a British diversionary attack in 1940). “We must fight to regain our mobility at sea. Britain has never been a great land power. We must always preserve our freedom of movement around Europe with our navy and air force….then choose the time and place for our attack.” He jabbed his finger into various sides of the orange. “The rotten spots will show up; then we will know where to attack.” He was describing how he intended to clear the Germans out of the Mediterranean and North Africa—the “soft underbelly” strategy was already in his mind.10

During these early years of the war, when the relationship between Churchill and U.S. President Roosevelt was still ripening, Canada’s role as what he called “the linchpin of the English-speaking peoples” came into its own.

Immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Churchill visited Washington and Ottawa. After addressing the Canadian Parliament (page 23), he posed for one of the most famous photographs in history. Yousuf Karsh’s “Roaring Lion” photograph is immortal but the lesser known “Smiling Lion” gives the world a look at the true humanity of a man under incredible pressure and recovering from a recent heart attack in Washington.11

After the photo shoot came a small, informal dinner party hosted by Prime Minister King. Here Churchill had an opportunity to swap stories with Canadian Air Vice-Marshal Billy Bishop VC, who had shot down seventy-two enemy aircraft while serving with the Royal Flying Corps during World War I.

Before the Roosevelt relationship grew close, Canadians had flattered themselves that they were essential interpreters between Britain and the United States, able to speak both “English” and “American.” In June 1940 they had an opportunity to make that claim a reality. Churchill contacted King, asking him to ask Roosevelt for certain specific aid. That request went to Washington via a senior government official, Hugh Keenleyside. From these discussions Keenleyside carried a message back to King, who passed it to Churchill, that Roosevelt hoped that, in the event of a British collapse, the British Fleet would be transferred to Canada and not allowed to fall into German hands.

Determined that the Americans and the world should realize the British were far from done, Churchill promised that Britain would fight on the beaches, landing grounds, fields, streets and hills, and never surrender “until, in God’s good time, the new world, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old.” Thus Canadians may take some credit for one of the most important speeches of the war, one that gave Roosevelt a strong argument against fellow Americans like Joseph Kennedy and Charles Lindbergh, who believed Britain had no chance of winning.12

Twice Churchill and Roosevelt met at Quebec City. Prior to the 1943 meeting Churchill visited Springwood, the Roosevelt estate in Hyde Park, New York, stopping at Niagara Falls on the way to Quebec. After returning to the
Quebec conference they agreed on the invasion of Normandy and a Southeast Asia command under Mountbatten. Following the conference, Churchill rested and fished at a secluded lake north of Quebec City.

The following year he again crossed the Atlantic on the Queen Mary to meet again with the President at Quebec. On the final day of the conference, McGill University of Montreal conferred honorary degrees on Churchill and Roosevelt on the terrace of the historic Citadel.

Senior Canadian military commanders had ample opportunities to meet with Churchill. He had a high opinion of Andy McNaughton, but that did not prevent British pressure to replace him as the Commander-in-Chief of Canadian forces with Harry Crerar. Churchill generally stayed out of the ongoing battles between the Canadian commanders and Montgomery over whether the Canadians would fight under direct British command or as an independent unit.

Churchill also visited Canadian troops after the D-Day invasion, and on one of those visits he asked to see active service. He was taken to a battery out of harm’s way where they trundled out a 275-pound shell on a trolley and handed Churchill some chalk. “He bent over and printed on the casing a message to Hitler. It was, General Crerar said, “most insulting.”

The battery crew rammed it into the breach and Churchill, standing as directed, pulled the lanyard. The shell went off with a great roar. Churchill beamed.13

Ordinary Canadian soldiers also had an opportunity to meet with Churchill. He visited their encampments in Britain, and some even had the honour of guarding Chartwell. On one of his infrequent wartime visits to his country home, Churchill was saluted by a soldier of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment.

“Why don’t you challenge me, Canada?” growled Churchill.

“I know who you are, sir.”

“Oh, how do you know me?”

“By your cigar, bald head, double chin, short neck and fat belly, sir.”

“But that could also describe a German.”

“You’re right, sir, but they would do up the bottom button on their vests.”

When the soldiers complained about the incessant rain in England, Churchill boosted their morale by assuring them that it was also raining on the Germans.14

Future Prime Minister Lester Pearson first met Churchill when he assisted with WSC’s famous 1946 Iron Curtain speech; they met subsequently many times. At their December 1951 luncheon (described by John Turner on page 45), Churchill and Pearson, then Foreign Secretary, pondered the future of Europe. Pearson recalled:

It was the pre-de Gaulle era when France was pleading for a European army and European unity. The PM was emphatic that Britain would not and should not join or support it in the form proposed. Forgetting the lessons of this century, he insisted that the British would fight with, but not in, European forces. The proper way to bring armies and peoples together, he asserted, was to maintain their national identities, to bring them together as a “bunch of sticks” bound by common interest in their own salvation. He did not believe in the “wood pulp” theory of unity.15

When Churchill visited Ottawa in 1952, he discussed the appointment of a new Governor-General with Prime Minister Louis Saint Laurent. The incumbent Governor-General, Viscount Alexander of Tunis, was returning to London as Churchill’s Minister of Defence. Both Churchill and King George VI agreed with Saint Laurent that the new Governor-General should be Canadian-born, and were delighted with the nomination of Vincent Massey, whom they had known as Canadian High Commissioner in London during the war.

When Saint Laurent stopped off at London on his world tour in 1954, he received invaluable personal advice from a seasoned traveller. He had made several such trips, Churchill confided, and he found that the schedule was almost always overcrowded and exhausting. Consequently, he made it a practice when travelling never to stand when he could sit, never to sit when he could lie down, never to walk when he could ride, and never to miss an opportunity to visit a bathroom.

Future Prime Minister John Diefenbaker’s encounter with Mackenzie King over Churchill is related in >>

“H e often peers at me over his glasses as if he is wondering what I may be up to. Everything he does is dramatized and full of life.”—LESTER PEARSON, LONDON, 1955
Turner’s interview (page 44) but, as a Canadian historian points out, “Churchill was both a talisman and a weapon” for Diefenbaker. After the “teetotaller incident” (page 45), Mrs. Diefenbaker admitted that her husband did indeed take a glass of sherry now and then. This confession did not mollify Churchill, who remarked that the worst defeat of his life was the time he lost an election to a prohibitionist.

Contemplating Churchill’s postwar appeal to the English-Speaking Peoples, Professor John Ramsden wrote:

Canada occupied a position of special prominence. This was partly because Canada itself had a place of special affection in Churchill’s heart, but also because regular visits, extensive personal friendships and years of practical cooperation after 1940 all helped to reinforce—and to make more lasting—the Churchill message to Canada.

Even as Canada exerted an independence of mind and interests throughout the war, Churchill never forgot that “the Senior Dominion” had declared war on Germany within a week of Britain itself, and he knew and appreciated that the First Canadian Division had arrived in Britain as early as December 1939. Meeting with the Canadian War Cabinet during the 1944 Quebec Conference, he expressed his gratitude in an impromptu speech, according to a Canadian cabinet minister present:

He set out to thank Canada for what was done in this war. His feelings got somewhat the better of him and he spilled over almost in tears. It was not only that we came in at the start and stayed in, but that we had carried the United Kingdom by outright gifts these past three years or so and, he prayed, would not let her go down when the war was over. Had it not been for the gifts, he said that the UK could not have pulled her weight in the war and in all truth cannot come through the troubles ahead. He said that the UK is now the greatest debtor country in the world. Our gifts, being largely raw materials, were the very base of her war industry and food supplies.

Churchill’s prayer was answered. After the war Canada cancelled all debts owed by Great Britain. Not the least of the reasons was the debt that Canadians felt they owed to Winston Churchill.

“M y impression of him is that he was the greatest man of the 20th century. He rescued Britain and saved the free world.”—JOHN TURNER, 2011

Endnotes

8. Ibid., 127.
9. Ibid., 129.
11. For the array of photographs see cover; Karsh’s own account is in this issue, page 29. For another account of the photo session see Maria Tippett, Portrait in Light and Shadow: The Life of Yousuf Karsh (Toronto: Anansi, 2007), 135-61.
“NOT BEING SCUPPERED”

Graham Farmelo writes: “I have read that WSC told Private Secretary Sir John Colville in 1951 that his new government’s priorities were ‘houses, red meat and not getting scuppered.’ But I can’t find it. Any ideas?”

It’s a wonderful quote but the verb is wrong; Churchill said, “…not being scuppered,” and it appears in Colville’s *Fringes of Power* ( Hodder & Stoughton US edition 1985), 644. Martin Gilbert also has it on page 717 of his Volume 8.

“THE U-BOAT PERIL”

We are asked for the reference to a popular quotation in Churchill’s *World War II* memoirs: “…the only thing that ever really frightened me during the war was the U-boat peril.” The index to his second volume, *Their Finest Hour* (London: Cassell, 1949), 528-29 is the place to look. It may throw readers off in that he actually wrote about this fright after the war:

The Admiralty had to be ready at many points and give protection to thousands of merchant vessels, and could give no guarantee except for troop convoys against occasional lamentable disasters. The only thing that ever really frightened me during the war was the U-boat peril. Invasion, I thought, even before the air battle, would fail. After the air victory it was a good battle for us. We could drown and kill this horrible foe in circumstances favourable to us, and, as he evidently realised, bad for him. It was the kind of battle which, in the cruel conditions of war, one ought to be content to fight. But now our life-line, even across the broad oceans, and especially in the entrances to the Island, was endangered. I was even more anxious about this battle than I had been about the glorious air fight called the “Battle of Britain.”

Although Churchill sometimes used the word “submarines,” when referring to German subs he almost always preferred to call the enemy craft “U-boats,” another example of his precise semantics. He was careful never to refer to British submarines as U-boats: the term was simply too associated with the enemy, and Britain’s survival hung on a successful campaign against them.

“There are two people who sink U-boats in this war, Talbot,” he told his director of Anti-Submarine Warfare in 1941. “You sink them in the Atlantic and I sink them in the House of Commons. The trouble is that you are sinking them at exactly half the rate I am.” Captain Talbot was later sacked.

In 1951 Churchill said that no one knew more about U-boats than the British Admiralty, “not because we are cleverer or braver than others, but because, in two wars, our existence has depended upon overcoming these perils. When you live for years on end with mortal danger at your throat, you learn in a hard school.”

At the same time he never failed to pay tribute to kindred allies who had provided critical aid in the U-boat war. On a May 1948 visit to the Royal Palace in Oslo he told the King of Norway:

We did not feel entirely alone because we had that invaluable help from Norway, given at great cost for many. Many a good ship was sunk, and I remember how your Prime Minister of those days said, ‘We feel as if they are our own children.’...the help which came from Norway was a very important factor in the victory over the U-boats [when] our existence depended on the lifeline across the Atlantic....It was this lifeline which we had to maintain, and the addition of many millions of tons of merchant shipping, manned by hardy and courageous men from Norway, played a very definite part in our existence.”

“WIT AND WISDOM”

EXTRACTED TEXT:

For some years the tendency of Socialist and Left-Wing forces has been to gird at the word “Empire” and espouse the word “Commonwealth,” because Oliver Cromwell cut off King Charles’s head and all that. Also, I suppose, because the word “Commonwealth” seems to have in it some association with, or suggestion of, the abolition of private property and the communal ownership of all forms of wealth. This mood is encouraged by the race of degenerate intellectuals of whom our island has produced during several generations an unfailling succession—these very high intellectual persons who, when they wake up every morning have looked around upon the British inheritance, whatever it was, to see what they could find to demolish, to undermine, or cast away….One must notice in other utterances on which Ministers have lately advised the King, the calculated omission of three words which have hitherto claimed many loyalties and much agreement…”Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…In fact, I have hitherto claimed many loyalties and have lately advised the King, the calculation of three words which have hitherto claimed many loyalties and much agreement…”Commonwealth”…“Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…In fact, I have hitherto claimed many loyalties and have lately advised the King, the calculation of three words which have hitherto claimed many loyalties and much agreement…”Commonwealth”…“Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement… “Empire”…“Dominion”…“British”…Indeed, I wonder myself that the word “Commonwealth” should satisfy the much agreement...
Remembering Churchill

FH Interviews Prime Minister John Turner


Finest Hour: Prime Minister, we are fascinated with your account of meeting Churchill in Ottawa on 30 December 1941. You could not have been very old.

John N. Turner: I was just a kid. My mother was a senior civil servant in Ottawa and I was twelve. She knew Prime Minister Mackenzie King, so we were well positioned just outside the House of Commons during one of his great speeches: “Some chicken!—Some neck!” I could hear every word because there were loudspeakers outside so we could listen. The speech is remembered for that line, but it also mobilized Canadian public opinion in the unity of the Commonwealth. I probably did not recognize its importance at the time, but I certainly did later in life.

I stood there with my sister as the great man came down the laneway. He mingled with the crowd and my mother introduced us to him. He looked me straight in the eye and said, “Good of you to be here, good luck!” That meeting became indelible in my memory. I have met a lot of people in my lifetime, but I can say without hesitation, he was the greatest person I have ever met. He was already a hero in Canada, and to me at that moment even more so.

FH: When you had your encounter, he had just come from his photo session with another Canadian, Yousuf Karsh....

JNT: Oh yes! It was moments after those memorable photographs. Karsh was a friend of our family whom I saw frequently. He displayed his own kind of bravery when he yanked the cigar from Churchill’s mouth just before snapping the first picture. Can’t you picture that scene? The result was the signature photograph of Winston Churchill. Here we are nearly half a century after his death and the photo turns up every few weeks, just about everywhere.

FH: In the Fifties you studied in England. Did you get to see him in that period?

JNT: No, but my impression of him at that time, which I still hold, is that he was the greatest man of the 20th century. He rescued Britain and saved the free world. It was one man’s courage, one man’s voice. His leadership, and later his close relationship with Roosevelt, were crucial to turning near-defeat into victory.

FH: You are one of several Prime Ministers who crossed paths with Churchill. How did your predecessors see him?

JNT: Mackenzie King was our Prime Minister in 1941, in fact our longest serving Prime Minister. He acted as an intermediary between Churchill and Roosevelt before the USA entered the war. King had some very odd ways that Terry Reardon sets out in his forthcoming book, but he had a remarkable career. He was constantly back and forth to Washington and certainly Roosevelt and Churchill used him as a go-between. Really only after Pearl Harbor did their relationship cement. Up until then, what King provided was the “Linchpin” between London and Washington, which Churchill spoke about so fondly.

In my early years in the House of Commons, the prime ministers were the Conservative John Diefenbaker and the Liberal Lester Pearson, both great admirers of Churchill. Although I belonged to a different party from Diefenbaker, the Members who enjoyed the House of Commons, like myself, had his affection. I was very fortunate in 1965 to be on a beach in Barbados with my wife when she said that there was someone in trouble in the water. I rushed in and grabbed him by his trunks and swam him back to safety. It
was John Diefenbaker! I am still the only non-Tory on the board of the Diefenbaker Foundation.

Diefenbaker was a teetotaller, which didn’t bode well for meeting Churchill, but they liked each other. I enjoy the story of a meeting when Diefenbaker refused a drink, saying he was not however a prohibitionist. Churchill responded: “Ah, I see you only hurt yourself.”

Mackenzie King prided himself on keeping control of his emotions, but Diefenbaker recorded one occasion in May 1942 when King lost his temper. On entering his office King accosted him: “What business have you to be here? You strike me to the heart every time you speak. In your last speech who did you mention? Did you say what I’ve done for this country? You spoke of Churchill. Churchill! Did he ever bleed for Canada?” There were tears in his eyes, rage on his face. Then the storm blew over and he said with impressive calm, “I regret this, but something awful has happened. A great British battleship, the Hood, has just been sunk. Where will we go from here?”

FH: Along with King acting between the President and the Prime Minister of Britain, didn’t Beaverbrook also play an integral role?

JNT: Yes, he was Churchill’s great friend, although in their early days this remarkable Canadian was not a political supporter. Beaverbrook was born William Maxwell Aitken in Maple, Ontario, in 1879. Successful in Canada, he moved to England in 1910, entered Parliament and started a newspaper chain which included the Daily Express. He was also close to Mackenzie King, but far better known in England than Canada. As Churchill’s Minister of Aircraft Production he was instrumental in getting planes moved from the States across the border into New Brunswick and from there ferried across the ocean to Britain. He made the deal with Roosevelt—a convenient way for the U.S. to get around its neutrality legislation, part of Roosevelt’s secret war. He was a good friend of my stepfather, Frank Ross. We had him over to dinner at our house in St. Andrew’s, New Brunswick, on several occasions. The last time I saw him, at the Ritz Hotel in Montreal, we downed a scotch together.

FH: We all remember the Ottawa speech, but Canadians also lent a hand to Churchill in his 1946 Fulton Speech.

JNT: Yes indeed. Mr. King seemed to be ever-present when the President and Churchill met, but I recall a part Lester Pearson played. Churchill had asked Mackenzie King to look over the Fulton speech but King hedged, as he did not want to take responsibility for anything Churchill might say. He did suggest that his “dear friend” consult Pearson, then the Canadian Ambassador in Washington, who knew his views on these matters and had his confidence.

Pearson was ushered into Churchill’s bedroom, and there he was in bed with a big cigar and a glass that evidently did not contain water. Churchill proposed to read his speech. Pearson writes: “This would have been a memorable experience for me, I know, but of course I would have heard him out without daring to interrupt the performance, which may have been what he had in mind. Hence I suggested that he let me take the script into a nearby room where I could read it with the care it deserved.”

After a page or so, it was evident that this would be an important speech. Pearson made a minor correction of the status of Missouri in the American Civil War, and had a major question about referring to World War II as “the Unnecessary War.” True, it could have been stopped by the right policy and actions in the 1920s-30s; but it could also be interpreted, especially in the American Midwest, as a justification for future U.S. isolation. Pearson states that “Mr. Churchill was courteous enough to agree with my two small suggestions and to thank me for them. That was my contribution to the famous Iron Curtain speech; a tiny footnote to history.”*

On 9 December 1951, when Pearson was External Affairs Minister, he visited Churchill at Chequers. The PM was in a grumpy mood, but the “pre-lunch drinks arrived and things looked up; our host came to life. He got even livelier as the lunch went on, with the accompanying wines. Over coffee and brandy Churchill continued to get brighter and brighter as I got droopier and droopier.”

FH: Sir Winston died when you were an MP from Montreal. Were you at the funeral?

JNT: Yes, though not in any official capacity. I think my leader, Prime Minister Pearson, was in the Cathedral along with other world leaders. I was on hand as the procession marched past and I had that last opportunity to pay my respects to him. For a brief moment in time I was in his presence, in a way. I could not help but feel how proud I was to have met him ever so briefly on that day in 1941.

For me he was a role model. I would like to think that in my nearly twenty-five years as a Member of Parliament, much of it as a Privy Counsellor and Minister of the Crown, and briefly as Prime Minister, that I conducted myself in the way of Winston Spencer Churchill. To me he always did what was right. I would like to think his example rubbed off on me.

*Churchill first used the phrase “the Unnecessary War” in a speech to the Belgian Chamber and Senate, 16 November 1945. —Ed.
A few months ago, Canadian troops retired from Afghanistan with casualties of 161 killed and several times that many wounded. Canada had troops on the ground fighting the Taliban by December 2001 and now, ten years later, American troops had relieved the Canadians in Kandahar Province, the toughest area of that country. Amongst NATO troops in this theatre, Canada’s war dead are surpassed only by those of Great Britain and the United States.

As the saying goes, Canada has “punched above her weight” in every major war over the past century. Canada’s wartime contributions rarely rate attention in the world, much to the chagrin of Canadians. To this day, the noble fight of Churchill and Britain in 1940-41 is believed to have been carried out “alone.” That is a serious disservice to the Dominions and the rest of the Commonwealth—Canada in particular.

Gordon Walker

Mr. Walker is a Director of the International Churchill Society Canada. A Queen’s Counsel, he has served as a Member of the Ontario Parliament and as a Minister of the Crown. He previously wrote “Election 1945: Why Winston Churchill Lost,” in Finest Hour 140.
In the Second World War, Canada declared war on Germany on 10 September 1939, within a week after Great Britain, following a debate in the House of Commons in Ottawa. Until then Canada had only modest armed forces: only 10,000 in uniform in the three branches, with little equipment—for example, just ten Bren guns. By the end of the war the Canadians had the fourth largest Navy and Air Force in the World and over a million men in uniform. That represented about 41 percent of all men between the ages of 18 and 45. There were 25,000 enlisted women as well. This was a massive proportion of fighting personnel in a population, at that time, of only 11 million.

For Canada, like Britain, World War II was a six-year war. Some soldiers served that entire time. By Christmas 1939 two Canadian battalions were in England. There were times when all that stood between London and the likely German invasion beaches were Canadian troops. When the Dunkirk evacuation occurred in May 1940, the British left 75,000 military vehicles behind (they had entered the war with only 80,000). Virtually defenceless on the ground, Britain turned to Canada for replacements. Canada responded—and then some, eventually producing 800,000 military transport vehicles for Britain and the Allies, including 50,000 tanks.

Canadian armed forces fought bravely in many fronts through Sicily, Italy, France, the Low Countries and Germany, right up to the war’s end. They took huge losses in the defence of Hong Kong and the attack on Dieppe. The Canadian army stormed the Normandy coast with the British and Americans. At sea the Canadian navy took part in convoys from Halifax to Britain each year of the war, providing the materials needed to keep Britain alive and the war effort fueled.

Supplying troops was not the only war effort. Canada trained 125,000 air crew over six years, producing armaments on a huge scale, as well as largely feeding Britain. Financially this lightly-populated nation sent vast sums of money to Britain.

David Dilks, in his book *The Great Dominion*, records a dinner conversation between Churchill and Prime Minster Mackenzie King in Ottawa after Churchill’s “Some Chicken” speech to the Canadian Parliament. King said: “Canada plans to make an immediate gift of $1 billion to Britain.” Churchill, accustomed to speaking in terms of “a thousand million,” wasn’t sure he’d heard right and asked King to repeat himself. “We are going to give you a billion dollars,” King repeated. Churchill was floored.

He then promised the conversion of a $700 million debt into an interest-free loan and a further $200 million cash, and a further $800 million and then $2000 million. As Dilks wrote, “Canada bled herself white for the cause.” For a nation of 11 million, the billions of dollars was a huge contribution that did much to keep Britain solvent. Over the course of the War, Canada spent $21 billion on the war effort, out of $33 billion in total national expenditures.

Despite a massive financial and material effort, Canada’s greatest loss was the 46,998 soldiers who died and the 60,000 who were wounded. The army counted about 25,000 dead, the RCAF some 18,000, and the navy 4000.

Canada has taken her fair share of war sacrifice, dating back to the Boer War at the turn of the 20th century. In the First World War there were over 66,000 Canadian dead amongst 600,000 soldiers, and of course many more wounded. The Korean War saw over 500 Canadian dead, and even the Vietnam War took a toll of Canadian lives.

Peacekeeping became the Canadian way for decades. Not a single peacekeeping force in the past fifty years was without Canadians, and over 121 Canadians have died in those efforts. Whenever the United Nations went to war, Canada was there. As recently as the Libyan revolution in 2011, a Canadian general directed the entire NATO effort. Canadians flew ten percent of the missions over Libya, fortunately with no casualties.

In a press conference with Churchill in Washington on 23 December 1941, Franklin Roosevelt said, “There are a good many nations besides our own that are at war.” Churchill, seated beside him, quickly added, “Canada.” Roosevelt replied, “Yes. Canada, as the Prime Minister suggests, is also….”

Churchill interrupted: “In the line.”

We Canadians have always been “in the line.” We often lament that so few have taken note.
Some historians have designated Canadians the original anti-Americans. This tag was applied because English-speaking Canada was founded by United Empire Loyalists who chose to remain under the British monarchy and left, or were driven out of, the new republic. Nevertheless, despite some bumps along the way (the War of 1812, Fenian Raids), the relationship between the two nations has been a model for the entire world for over 200 years.

Parallel to that has been the growth of a harmonious relationship between Great Britain and its former colonies, solidly confirmed as allies in the First World War. These alliances survived both a growing Canadian independence of mind and American isolationism until the development of what Churchill called the “Special Relationship” between the United Kingdom and the United States during the upheaval of the Second World War.

A master of memorable description, Churchill called Canada “the linchpin of the English-speaking World” to describe the Dominion’s role. Even though President Roosevelt had initiated a personal correspondence between himself and First Lord of the Admiralty Churchill, the relationship was never as meaningful to him as it was to Churchill. The role of Prime Minister Mackenzie King and his emissary, Hugh Keenleyside, in conveying messages to and from the two great leaders (described elsewhere in this issue) is an illuminating example of why Churchill considered the “linchpin” so important.

By the end of World War II there was no need of a linchpin—and not just because Roosevelt and Churchill had met directly many times. By then Roosevelt was wooing Stalin in a manner similar to Churchill’s courtship of the President, much to the Prime Minister’s chagrin. Roosevelt did not visit Britain during the war and his suspicions of British imperial goals never abated, although he did agree to make Germany the primary target,
and the Atlantic the primary ocean of combat.

Roosevelt was succeeded by Harry Truman, a man from Missouri with no particular interest in a special relationship with anyone. Canada’s prime ministers were gradually pushed aside by both nations and their linchpin had become virtually meaningless by the time Churchill returned to power in October 1951.

One of Churchill’s first acts was to visit the U.S. to build a relationship with Truman. They had met at Potsdam and again en route to the “Iron Curtain” speech at Fulton, but the 1945 British election had sent Churchill home early from Potsdam. After Fulton, Truman had quickly distanced himself from the heat generated by Churchill’s criticisms of their Soviet wartime ally.

In 1951 Churchill’s reception in Washington was not as warm as his wartime visits. A secretary recorded that Truman was “rather abrupt with poor old Winston” and Secretary of State Dean Acheson recalled Churchill pleading for a bigger role in naval affairs, because “for centuries England held the seas against every tyrant so surely we can make room for Britain to play her historic role upon that western sea whose floor is white with the bones of Englishmen.”

Canada was not part of these deliberations, nor was Canada a participant in Prime Minister Churchill’s efforts to engage his wartime colleague, President Dwight Eisenhower, in a common front toward Russia in the 1950s. (The 2004 International Churchill Conference in Bermuda explored that effort.)

Throughout the succeeding decades such concepts as the “linchpin,” like the Anglo-American Special Relationship, grew increasingly irrelevant. Although Britain was a nuclear power, the standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union dominated world attention and the British seemed to have influence only when they supported American goals. Events like the Suez Crisis, during which the U.S. sided with the Soviets in demanding withdrawal of an Anglo-French expedition to recover the nationalized Suez Canal, illustrated quite different national interests.

In the 1960s Canada’s relationship with her southern neighbour became somewhat strained. Prime Minister John Diefenbaker and President John F. Kennedy did not much like each other, and Prime Minister Lester Pearson angered President Lyndon Johnson by refusing to support American actions in Vietnam. At the time it was noted in all countries that President Johnson was one of the few world leaders who did not attend Sir Winston Churchill’s funeral.

Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and President Richard Nixon had nothing in common, and Trudeau’s nationalist energy policy annoyed Americans. In order not to offend Quebec sovereignists Trudeau also kept his distance from Britain, other than to “bring home” Canada’s constitution.

Prime Minister Brian Mulroney was an enthusiastic junior partner in the reborn special relationship between Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, and he was even closer to the first President Bush. Canada’s Conservative Party has historically preferred Imperial Preference and ties to the “Mother Country” over any reciprocity arrangement with the United States, so Mulroney’s Conservative predecessors were probably “spinning in their graves” over his policies, particularly the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Many Canadians were surprised when the second President Bush, with British Prime Minister Tony Blair in the Congressional Gallery, called Britain “America’s best friend,” but it is likely that Prime Minister Jean Chrétien of Canada did not care. There was little support in Canada for any involvement in Iraq, although there was equally little dissent when Canada joined Britain, the United States and other NATO countries in Afghanistan.

Today it is doubtful if many citizens of the “Anglosphere” have much understanding of the history of the linchpin or the Special Relationship. The Churchill Centre explored the latter (there was little mention of the former) at its 2011 conference in London, but at least one speaker bluntly labelled the concept irrelevant. He pointed out that Barack Obama’s roots are in Hawaii and Indonesia and that when he thinks of “that western sea” he probably envisions the Pacific.

Britain’s attention is now directed towards Europe and the European Union. As they eye the precarious course of the euro, many Britons express happiness over their decades-old decision to keep their own currency. In Canada there is no present interest in a linchpin role, and Canadian eyes are increasingly focused on Asia. The politics of the Keystone XL oil pipeline in the United States resulted in a high-profile trade visit by Prime Minister Stephen Harper to China, and talks of a Sino-Canadian free trade treaty. At the same time China’s “president-in-waiting” was visiting Washington, despite Chinese-American competition for economic and cultural influence.

The linchpin, like the Special Relationship, still has its uses. On March 14th, the British Prime Minister was visiting Washington, and in London The Times ran a front-page story: “The New Special Relationship: This Time It’s Personal.” But behind this warm relationship, the trappings, and the winning and dining of the cultural and political glitterati lies a substantive truth expressed by the Prime Minister: “The special relationship survives because it is based on common interests and common values.”

It is also based on a noble history. Therein perhaps lies an important role of The Churchill Centre and Societies: to remind our citizens and future generations of the great panoply of the good done by this historic relationship and that together we can enjoy an even greater future.
125 YEARS AGO
Spring 1887 • Age 12
“By return post please!!!”

Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee celebration was set for 21 June, and Winston wished to attend, writing his mother on 24 May, “I wish the Jubilee was here very much.” By 11 June, as Randolph Churchill explained in the official biography, he was concerned:

Miss Thomson doesn’t want me to go home for the Jubilee and because she says that I shall have no place in Westminster Abbey and so it is not worth going. Also that you will be very busy and unable to be with me much.

Now you know that this is not the case. I want to see Buffalo Bill & the Play as you promised me. I shall be very disappointed, disappointed is not the word I shall be miserable, after you have promised me, and all, I shall never trust your promises again. But I know that Mummy loves her Winny much too much for that.

Write to Miss Thomson and say that you have promised me and you want to have me home….Remember for my sake. I am quite well but in a torment about coming home it would upset me entirely if you were to stop me.

The next day he decided that his mother needed more help and thoughtfully drafted a letter for her to send to Miss Thomson: “Could you allow Winston to come up to London, on Saturday the 18th for the Jubilee. I should like him to see the procession very much, and I also promised him that he should come up for the Jubilee.”

Three days later, with no letter from his mother, Winston was in full panic:

I am nearly mad with suspense. Miss Thomson says that she will let me go if you write to ask for me. For my sake write before it is too late. Write to Miss Thomson by return post please!!!

The suspense finally ended when his mother’s letter arrived in time, and Winston made it to the Jubilee.

100 YEARS AGO
Spring 1912 • Age 37
“War will never come in our time”

Germany was on British minds.

The former Tory prime minister A. J. Balfour wrote to Churchill on 22 March that a war with “no other object than to restore the Germanic Empire of Charlemagne in a modern form appears to me at once so wicked and so stupid as to be almost incredible!” Many in France, Balfour added, “regard a war in May as inevitable….But imagine it being possible to talk about war as inevitable when there is no quarrel, and nothing to fight over! We live in strange times!”

Churchill did not think war with Germany was inevitable, despite his recent speech suggesting that the German Navy was a “luxury” while the British Navy was a necessity. To this end, he proposed in April a “naval holiday” for Germany and Britain in 1913: Should Germany cease building ships for a year, he said, Great Britain would do the same. The speech led to informal communications between Churchill and the Kaiser, through their mutual friend Sir Ernest Cassel. Unfortunately, the Kaiser expressed “his great regret…that such an arrangement would only be possible between allies.”

Around the same time Albert Ballin, a German shipping magnate and the Kaiser’s closest adviser on maritime matters, wrote Cassel suggesting that Churchill send an unofficial message, by way of Cassel, to the Kaiser. Churchill records in The World Crisis that “in compliance I therefore wrote the following letter for the Emperor’s eye”:

I am deeply impressed by the Emperor’s great consideration….I suppose it is difficult for either country to realize how formidable it appears to the eyes of the other. Certainly it must be almost impossible for Germany, with her splendid armies and warlike population capable of holding their native soil against all comers, and situated inland with road and railway communications on every side, to appreciate the sentiments with which an island State like Britain views the steady and remorseless development of a rival naval power of the very highest efficiency. The more we admire the wonderful work that has been done in the swift creation of German naval strength, the stronger, the deeper and the more preoccupying those sentiments become. Patience, however, and good temper accomplish much; and as the years pass many difficulties and dangers seem to settle themselves peacefully.

The message apparently fell on deaf ears. There was no naval holiday, yet Churchill continued to believe that war with Germany was not inevitable, and said so on 15 May in London:

But, my lords and gentlemen, a war may go on for a long time before any decision is obtained. Or again, and this is much the more likely of the two contingencies, it is more likely that we should act, as we shall do, with discre-
tion, with sobriety, with sincerity, with simplicity, with good-will to all nations—with prejudice and rancour against none. It is more likely, and I say it with sincere conviction, that war will never come in our time and perhaps will have passed from the world, at any rate for a period which our most adventurous imagination enables us to foresee.

75 YEARS AGO

Spring 1937 • Age 62

“Safety is fatally imperiled”

Twenty-five years before, Churchill could say with “sincere conviction” that “war will never come in our time.” He did not believe that now. “We seem to be moving, drifting, steadily, against our will, against the will of every race and every people and every class,” he said in the House, “towards some hideous catastrophe. Everybody wishes to stop it, but they do not know how.”

His speech was well received but, when Neville Chamberlain succeeded Stanley Baldwin as Prime Minister the following month, no office was offered to Churchill.

Churchill received an invitation from the German Ambassador, Joachim von Ribbentrop, to meet German Field Marshal Blomberg at a luncheon on 15 May: “I do not know whether you have met Generalfeldmarshal von Blomberg before, but I am sure you will like him, and a talk between you and him might be useful from every point of view.”

Churchill replied, “It would give my wife and me great pleasure to accept your kind invitation….I have never yet made his acquaintance, but some time ago our Military Attaché in Berlin, Colonel Hotblack, told me that the Field Marshal had spoken to him appreciatively about some of my writings on the war. In consequence I ventured to send him a copy of one of my volumes, receiving in response a most agreeable acknowledgement.”

Churchill continued to receive defense information from a variety of sources at home and abroad. Wing-Commander C.T. Anderson gave him a letter from Group Captain Lachlan MacLean which said that by 1938 the Royal Air Force would have “neither the means of offence or defence.” This was followed by a memorandum from Sir Cyril Deverell, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, on the status of the British tank program. In June, the French Minister for Air, Pierre Cot, sent WSC a secret memorandum on German military strength. At a luncheon with the Anti-Nazi Council on 4 June, Churchill said:

“I feel our country’s safety is fatally imperiled both by its lack of arms and by the Government’s attitude towards the Nazi gangsters. It is fostering in them the dangerous belief that they need not fear interference by us whatever they do. That can only encourage those savages to acts of aggression and violence of every kind. I have, therefore, chosen to go my own way and to act independently in order to further the safety of our country and of the civilization without which we cannot survive as a nation.”

Churchill consulted his solicitors about a potential libel action based on a passage from a Coronation Commentary by Geoffrey Dennis: “Those who came out as King’s champions were an unprepossessing company. An unstable ambitious politician, flitting from party to party, extreme reactionary, himself the first-fruit of the first famous snob-dollar marriage; ‘half an alien and wholly undesirable’ as long ago was said.”

Churchill believed this was defamatory, claiming his view was “absolutely confirmed” by “two separate high legal opinions.” Perhaps his solicitors were telling their client what he wanted to hear, because the famous barrister they consulted, Sir Patrick Hastings, didn’t think much of Churchill’s chances:

I find it difficult to say that this most offensive paragraph amounts to an actionable libel. To say of a politician that he is “unstable, ambitious or reactionary” would not of itself in my opinion be defamatory. On the other hand to say that his is “a flitter from party to party and wholly undesirable” might but not necessarily would be held to be prima facia actionable. I must however point out that a plea of justification would of course be open to a Defendant as well as the much more dangerous plea of fair comment… I must point out the great danger of starting an action unless it is intended to bring it to trial in the event of the defendant setting up a defence. Such an action once started and thereafter abandoned is a most unfortunate occurrence.

In the event, Churchill did not file a libel action.

50 YEARS AGO

Spring 1962 • Age 87

Reading at Sea

In April Churchill enjoyed a cruise of the Mediterranean with Aristotle Onassis, aboard the Greek’s floating palace, the Christina. Still a voracious reader, Sir Winston took many books along to read, including Pasha’s War in the Desert, Jane Austen’s Persuasion and Robert Graves’s Claudius the God.

Back in Britain by the end of the month, Churchill spent most of May and June at Chartwell with occasional visits to London—The Other Club on 10 May, a birthday dinner for Lord Beaverbrook on 25 May, and lunch with Beaverbrook on 3 June.
I should like to begin by thanking Randolph Churchill for his generous introduction. It was my good fortune during my time in Washington to get to know several very distinguished members of the Churchill family. It is a great pleasure to see some of them here today, and to take part in this conference that celebrates Sir Winston Churchill’s remarkable transatlantic vision. My only regret is that I have not been able to attend the whole event.

My thanks, too, to Allen Packwood and Phil Reed for their help and support in preparing for the Conference. Again, I know them both from my previous incarnation and I am therefore in no doubt as to how fortunate we are to have them in their current roles. And I cannot resit adding that my wife and I were lucky enough to be in Washington in 2004 for the exhibition “Churchill and the Great Republic,” curated by Allen. It was opened by Lady Soames and the President of the United States, and was a memorable celebration of the extraordinary Anglo-American relationship that was forged by Churchill against the odds, and of which he was, of course, the incarnation.

Sir David Geoffrey Manning GCMG CVO was British Ambassador to the United States from 2003 to 2007. He drafted the famous “Manning Memo” summarizing the substance of a January 2003 meeting between President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair during the prelude to the invasion of Iraq. He has since been appointed to the Household of HRH The Duke of Cambridge and Prince Harry of Wales. We hasten to explain (Churchill might say “for the benefit of any old Etonians present”) that in the first two paragraphs opposite, Nell Gwynne (1650-1687) was the mistress of King Charles II.
Churchill’s Special Relationship has been analyzed and discussed by the best in the business in the past twenty-four hours, so I have many hard acts to follow. I am conscious, too, that a degree of caution and humility is very much in order: I left Washington and the Diplomatic Service some four years ago and no longer deal with the U.S. relationship up close and personal. And I was reminded just how easy it is to get the perspective wrong when I was walking past Nell Gwynne House in Chelsea recently. Standing in front of it were two middle-aged American ladies. I heard one challenge the other:

"Nell Gwynne—d’you know who she was?" “Oh sure,” the other replied confidently, “She was a good-works sort of person.” Well perhaps, in a way, she was.

So, with those important caveats, where do I think the Special Relationship is today and where might it be going?

On the face of it, the relationship seems to be in good shape. President Obama’s State Visit to the UK in May was a reaffirmation of ties at the pinnacle of government; militarily Britain and the United States worked hand in glove in the successful Libya campaign. Along with France, they can take much of the credit for the overthrow of an egregiously vicious dictator. Bilateral intelligence ties are apparently as strong as ever; trade and investment remain at the core of the relationship; and so do contacts between Britons and Americans at all levels and in all walks of life. But despite these apparently encouraging appearances, I worry that recent, high level political exchanges and military successes may mask a more troubling underlying trend. For reasons I shall discuss, I think we risk a process of secular decline in the strength of the bilateral relationship in which, partly by design and partly by accident, there is a weakening of the intimacy and reflex of cooperation that we have enjoyed over the past sixty years—with consequences not just for the Special Relationship but for the wider transatlantic relationship too. Let me list some of the factors that worry me.

First, there is a corrosive crisis of confidence. These are very rough times. We are living through the worst recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s. But while the United States, Great Britain and our European partners are all in the same deep hole, there has been little agreement on what to do about it. There has been little confidence among Americans that Europeans (whether in the Euro Zone or not) have the political will to dig their way out; and little confidence among Europeans that the United States is up to the job either. Americans look with dismay at the protracted problems of the Euro Zone, which they fear threaten the prospects for global economic recovery; and also with polite, but I suspect deepening, skepticism at the UK’s approach which they worry is all retrenchment and no growth. For their part, the Europeans including many Britons, look at the state of the U.S. economy >>
and wonder whether the world’s great engine of postwar growth can any longer power national, let alone international, recovery. What are we to make of a U.S. that runs up massive debts, flirts dangerously with default, and whose political system now seems to many outsiders so polarized that effective government is paralyzed? Tim Geithner shakes his head over the Euro Zone; we shake our heads about a U.S. Congress that seems to confuse separation of powers with the promotion of impotency, if not bankruptcy. Both sides deplore the other’s apparent penchant for near-death financial experiences.

This mutual crisis of confidence across the Atlantic is exacerbated by an accompanying introversion. Not surprisingly we are preoccupied with the scope and scale of our own immediate domestic problems: how to find some sort of politically acceptable solution to the debt and deficit conundrum in the U.S.; how to save the Euro and perhaps the EU itself. Added to our distraction is the political timetable. In the U.S., the Presidential election is a year away; in France, only six months away. And Chancellor Merkel’s re-election timetable also has an important bearing on the handling of the Euro Zone crisis.

The coincidence of struggling economies on both sides of the Atlantic, and fraught domestic politics, consumes much of the oxygen, and, I suspect, leaves rather little time or energy for the broader transatlantic relationship and, within it, the relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States.

It is to the Anglo-American relationship specifically that I want now to turn. The present British government made much when it came into office of its desire to put more distance between London and Washington, and to cool the rhetoric of the Blair/Clinton, Blair/Bush, Brown/Bush years. At the same time, the Conservative Party element of the new coalition government came to power skeptical about the European Union and Britain’s role within it. For the first time that I, anyway, can recall, we had a British government that paraded its reluctance to be closely identified with either the United States or Europe, the twin pillars of British foreign policy for more than fifty years.

There were various reasons for this stance: in particular, the incoming government believed that the UK had become over-identified with American policies. Personally, I believe their concerns about “poodleism” were exaggerated but—also personally—I have no objection to the proposition that less should be said publicly about the Special Relationship. In my experience, official Washington can become tired and perplexed at constant British references to it, and constant demands for reassurance about it. Content, not labelling, is what matters to American Administrations: a “let’s just do it” attitude. And as far as the UK is concerned, there can be too much analysis of, and agonizing about, the Special Relationship, at the expense of thinking about foreign policy more broadly. It is no bad thing, therefore, to get on with it, without constantly rehearsing its history and significance.

But this was not quite the set of arguments that the new British government advanced. Instead, we were told—or anyway left with the strong impression—that the UK was consciously shifting its focus and priorities to old Commonwealth friends and new regional powers. In my view, this sent a confused message about where the UK’s key interests really lie. Old Commonwealth friendships should indeed be carefully fostered—in the past the UK has often been careless in this regard—but Australia, Canada and New Zealand are a long way away and through no fault of their own are no substitute for the relationship with the United States.

Developing good relations with the so-called BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, China) and other emerging powers is an entirely sensible—though in truth hardly novel—strategy in a world of shifting political and economic realities. But this is essentially a commercial as much as a foreign policy calculation: we only have to look at how those two prominent BRICs, Russia and China, vote at the UN on Syria, or the approach of Brazil and Turkey to Iran, to see the limitations of this prescription.
The new British government’s decision to insist on greater distance from Washington probably troubled the incumbent U.S. President less than it would have done his recent predecessors. President Obama is not just a post-World War II president, he is a post-Cold War president. The military alliance that bound Britain and America together during the Second World War, the Korean War, the Cold War and the Gulf Wars, is not central either to his experience or to his view of foreign and security policy. Nor do his background and upbringing make it likely that his natural focus is the UK or Europe. With a Kenyan father and an upbringing spent partly in Hawaii and partly in Indonesia, he is not the child of containment and the Atlantic Alliance. It is not surprising if his personal focus is Asia which, with the rise and challenge of China, is also where United States interests are now predominantly engaged.

A year and a half on, my impression is that the British government has found that studied coolness about Anglo-American relations carries as many risks as over-hyped enthusiasm. The UK took the lead on Libya in close partnership with France; and the Prime Minister recently revived the doctrine of liberal interventionism when addressing the United Nations General Assembly. You may or may not support those policy choices, but the point for our discussion is that neither was—nor is—a viable proposition without the United States. Apart from France, there is little appetite in Europe for an interventionist foreign policy or an expeditionary defence capability; and very little prospect of finding capable partners elsewhere.

If Libya has reminded us how critical the relationship with Washington is in pursuit of our foreign and security policy goals, it should also have reminded us of another important truth at the heart of the Special Relationship: our willingness and capacity to contribute real capability to military operations. The UK has consistently spent more than 2% of GDP on defence; and has consistently sustained land, sea and air forces of high-quality expeditionary capability. This has made us valued partners of the United States across the defence and security spectrum. Our contribution has been relatively small alongside that of the United States which, it may be worth reminding ourselves, still spends seven hundred billion dollars a year on defence—more than the next fourteen countries combined. But, relatively small or not, the UK contribution has been valued by successive American administrations as real, not token. The UK has had a voice in the debate because we have been willing to have a dog in the fight.

Will this be true in the future?

The present British government inherited a severe budgetary crisis at the Ministry of Defence. Action was urgent. But the scale of the cuts that have been imposed on the armed forces raises questions about whether—despite the official assurances—we will really retain a full-spectrum capability, and an effective expeditionary force, at the end of the retrenchment process. We have chosen to cut defence to the point where we may find it hard to demonstrate that our >>
spending remains at 2% or more of GDP, the target that we urge our NATO partners to set themselves. Cutting defence drastically is of course an absolutely legitimate political choice. But we should be conscious that we have deliberately made that choice—after all, the government has chosen to ring-fence other departmental budgets—and we should be conscious, too, that there are consequences for us as far as relations with the United States and our other allies are concerned. Security is, and has been, at the heart of the Special Relationship. If the UK can no longer play, or does not want to play, more than a minor or token military role, we should not be surprised if Washington views our importance in the scheme of things accordingly.

And already, I suspect, we have to work harder than used to be the case to make our voice heard in the White House, and to persuade Congress of our relevance. I recently asked an old friend who is a former, very senior, U.S. diplomat what he thought the foreign policy issues were on President Obama’s radar screen, when the latter had time to tear himself away from domestic problems and his own re-election battles. He listed the global economic crisis; two and a half wars (namely Afghanistan, and the aftermath of Iraq and Libya); China; the Middle East and Iran; the Arab awakening; and the difficulty of modernizing international institutions and making them fit for purpose.

You may or not may agree with this list, or the priority he gave the different issues. What seems significant to me is that neither the UK nor Europe figure—unless smuggled in under the global economic rubric. When I pointed this out, my friend countered that the list was one of

problems, and Europe was not a problem. But he acknowledged that a Europe crowded out of the agenda might easily presage declining U.S. engagement and investment in the special and transatlantic relationships. He also warned that, among a minority anyway, there was weariness in the U.S. with seemingly intractable foreign policy entanglements—a romantic longing for an isolationist approach, however unrealistic this may be in a globalised world. He also said that there was a growing fatigue with the idea that the hard-pressed American taxpayer should continue to underwrite European security when European governments and taxpayers were unwilling to fund serious defence budgets themselves. Until recently, this is not a charge I would have expected Americans to have laid against the UK. As to the future, I am not so sure.

The economic crisis; political preoccupations; the shifting American and indeed European focus of attention to Asia; American weariness with subsidizing a Europe unwilling to pay the going rate for defence; and UK and wider European doubts about American capability to transcend divisive domestic politics and put the American economy and body politic on an even keel—these are all issues that are in my opinion having an attritional effect on the Special Relationship and the broader transatlantic relationship, the half-hidden reality below the surface of State Visits and Qaddafi’s overthrow. I do not want to
exaggerate the extent or speed of the process. But neither do I think that we should ignore what is happening and the attendant risks to a partnership that has served us so well for so long.

So what should we do? The first thing, perhaps rather the Churchillian thing, is keep our nerve. In my view, prophecies about the inevitable decline of the West are overdone. Our political and economic system has brought us unparalleled peace and prosperity. We may now be wrestling with enormous problems but we should not conclude that our system and values have somehow been wrong all along or that they have outlived their purpose and been overtaken by history. As Sir Max Hastings said yesterday, the individual counts; leadership counts; human destiny is the result of human agency, not just ill-defined currents of history.

Of course we must accept a world in which China is a great power and acquiring a new weight in the international system; of course we must accept that we are witnessing the emergence of a new multi-polar global system. The U.S. must—we all must—accommodate this new reality. But that is not the same thing as accepting the argument that we are destined to decline, more or less gracefully, playing second fiddle in an Asian century. I take the optimistic, perhaps minority view that the U.S. may recover more strongly and more quickly than the pessimists predict. The power of America to reinvent itself should not be underestimated—and it often is in Europe. Let’s not talk ourselves into exaggerating our problems, great though they are, or exaggerating the strengths of China and the other emerging powers, great though they are. Let’s resist the idea of inevitable decline; let’s keep faith with ourselves, our system and our values.

But at the same time, let’s recognize that the exceptional quality of the Special Relationship is not God-given. We need to value it, work at it, find time for it, find new ways of developing it; and Britons need to work harder at this than Americans because the truth is that it matters more to us than to them. We live in a world that is arguably more complex and more uncertain than at any time since the end of the Cold War. Against the backdrop of a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape, we should sustain our tried and trusted alliances and friendships. If the United Kingdom does not remain a capable security partner, we risk irrelevance. I do not mean by this that the United States will ignore us or become indifferent to us. But American Administrations are going to spend their time talking to those who have the ability to contribute and make a difference to the agenda that matters in Washington. The Special Relationship cannot live by sentiment alone.

I believe, incidentally, though it is not a view that will find favour with all in this audience, that the same argument applies to sustaining Britain’s role in Europe. And let me add in this context that, in my experience, Americans want the EU to be a strong and effective partner in a multi-polar world, and believe this is much more likely if the UK is an energetic player in Europe. They do not see the Special Relationship as an alternative for the UK; and nor I believe should we. The more relevant we are in Europe, the more relevant we are to the United States, and vice-versa.

Let me end with a specific proposal that I have voiced elsewhere and that I believe would strengthen the Special Relationship both symbolically and practically and give it new focus: an idea for a time of straitened circumstances. In last year’s UK Strategic Defence and Security Review, the government wondered aloud what it might do with the second of the two aircraft carriers that we are now building, and which we may not be able to afford to bring into service. One possibility is to lay up the carrier as soon as it is built; another is to sell it. I suggest that we should instead look at making it a joint Anglo-American aircraft carrier to be deployed in both bilateral and NATO roles whether in the Atlantic, the Gulf, the Indian Ocean or in the Pacific.

Here is something that would reaffirm our security links. Here is something that would very visibly reassert the potency of what has been, and will I hope remain, a special relationship of real benefit to Great Britain, to the United States, and to the whole transatlantic community.
• Note by Michael McMenamin:

It’s not that often that her father can find the perfect gift for a teenage daughter. But when I read, during Margaret Thatcher’s political demise, that there was a run in London on Thatcher t-shirts, I was inspired. It was a great t-shirt with the then-Mrs. Thatcher’s face on the front wearing a beret, à la Che Guevara, bearing the legend, “Thatcherite Revolutionary.” Across the back were the Prime Minister’s notable accomplishments: Victory in the Falklands; the fall of the Berlin Wall; the government-owned industries and utilities she helped to privatize and to make profitable; the rescue of the British economy from stagnation, inflation and high unemployment.

Alas, as my daughter Kelly, who still thinks of herself as a Thatcherite Revolutionary, explains at right, the t-shirt tells us more about Thatcher’s career and accomplishments than the new film. Which is not to denigrate Meryl Streep’s Oscar-winning portrayal, which was all we have come to expect from a great actress.

Flawless Performance in a Flawed Film

Kelly McMenamin Wang

The Iron Lady, 20th Century Fox, written by Abi Morgan, produced by Damian Jones.

Best Actress Oscars are sometimes off the mark, but not in 2012. Meryl Streep nailed her role as Margaret Thatcher, and with the facial prosthetics you almost forget you’re not watching Thatcher herself. Herein lies the disappointment: the film spends so much time (about 40%) on a fictional account of Thatcher’s current dementia-filled life while glossing over her accomplishments that it wastes Streep’s talent, and does a disservice to one of the most influential leaders of our time.

One of the most grating things about how so many people—including script writer Abi Morgan—judge successful women is that unless she fits some mythical mold, where she is as sweet a mother as June Cleaver yet able to cut men down to size while caring deeply about everyone’s feelings, her accomplishments and character are unworthy of universal admiration.

Obviously, Lady Thatcher doesn’t remotely fit this mythical mold. Sure, she could cut men down to size, but she could also be stubborn, abrasive and dogmatic, emphasizing ideas more than feelings. To portray this as a flaw misses the mark. Conviction doesn’t mean a person doesn’t care.

Thatcher cared deeply about her country and hoped to save it from the road to serfdom, where state ownership of industry and enterprise eventually leads. The film focuses more on her imperfections as a mother than the fact she was one of the most powerful symbols of female equality: a grocer’s daughter who became longest serving prime minister in the 20th century. And she had a happy marriage and raised two children—imperfectly, as most women do.

The film glosses over key details of her accomplishments and the amazing strength it took to achieve them. UK public debt, as a percentage of GDP, was about 45% when she took office. It was just above 25% when she left. While the debt is back up there today, it could be worse. If not for Thatcher’s will to ignore calls to ease her anti-inflationary measures, Britain’s situation might today resemble Greece’s.

Some argue that her prescriptions were too harsh. Well, find a real-life case where double-digit inflation was tamed with low interest rates. It’s Pollyannaish to suggest that 15% inflation could have been overcome with anything other than
high, punishing interest rates. Thatcher understood the importance of sticking to her convictions despite rampant calls to back off. Results matter, and inflation hurts the poor more than the rich. That’s caring.

Alas, you won’t find any of this in “The Iron Lady.” More’s the pity. By the way, it was a really great t-shirt.

**From the Sublime to the Ridiculous**

**DAVID FREEMAN**


Author Ashley Jackson, a professor of military history at King’s College, London, may be new to Churchill studies, but he has produced the best medium-length Churchill biography now available. Asked by the publishers to write *Churchill* in their new Great Lives series, Jackson was initially hesitant. We are very glad that he changed his mind.

Shunning the “clever” or “revisionist,” Jackson set out to produce an uncontroversial and trustworthy account for those new to the subject. He succeeded, but he has also done much more.

There is nothing new about Churchill in his book, Jackson admits. References are all secondary sources, mostly the official biography but also good critical studies such as those by Stephen Roskill and Geoffrey Best; there is a generous helping of quotes from the Churchill canon or Richard Langworth’s *Churchill By Himself*.

Jackson familiarized himself with the controversies, myths and interpretations of Churchill’s life, addressing them when he assesses Churchill’s performance in each episode. “As was always the case with Churchill,” Jackson writes, “qualities that some hated him for were the very foundation of the success that others admired him for” (128). Nowhere is this more true than over Churchill’s attitude towards war.

Churchill’s colleagues often noted the enthusiasm and energy he demonstrated in wartime, drawing incorrect conclusions. He also discomfited people with warnings about the need to confront Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. That led to accusations that he was a warmonger, which Jackson stoutly denies: “His own experience of war and the ugly, prosaic nature of death in battle ensured this….Nevertheless, that was no excuse for not being thoroughly prepared” (125). The zeal Churchill brought to military campaigns, so disparaged by some, was precisely what made him a great and successful leader.

In his final chapters, Jackson demolishes what he describes as the “decline” and “splendid anachronism” pictures of Churchill. The latter has often been used as a way of paying WSC backhanded compliments. He was a hopeless romantic, the argument goes, and while this made him a fine war leader, it also made him unsuitable for peacetime, especially after 1945. In fact, says Jackson, Churchill was “no different from the vast majority of aging people.” The image of WSC as dinosaur “sits ill alongside clear evidence throughout his life of adaptability to changing circumstances.” For example, Churchill understood the ramifications of the nuclear age while “focusing firmly on the future, revering aspects of the past, yet always able to act effectively in the present” (338).

The “decline” narrative is a common false thesis developed by Churchill’s more adamant critics. To illustrate this, Jackson cites David Cannadine’s insistence that Churchill did not adapt to modern developments and died a sad and disappointed man.

“This interpretation,” Jackson observes, “reflects a desperately ageist and teleological way of looking at things and focuses entirely on the negative.” It appears to blame Churchill for getting old, conflates his old age with postwar British decline, and suggests his life was about nothing other than politics. The critics fail to register Churchill’s achievements in other spheres such as family, literature and painting (377).

This is not a work of hagiography. Jackson acknowledges Churchill’s character flaws—and Clementine’s occasional and thankless efforts to correct them. When Jackson makes mistakes of his own, they are minor. For example, Churchill retired from Parliament in 1964 not 1959, when in fact he was last reelected (367). Also, Churchill outlived his younger antagonist Nye Bevan by more than four years, making it impossible for Bevan to have reflected on Churchill’s death (253).

Altogether Professor Jackson has produced a thoughtful and reliable life of Winston Churchill that is thorough yet manageable in size. It deserves to be ranked among the best biographies of Britain’s best prime minister.
The cover of this stunningly overpriced book describes the author as a Warsaw-born Holocaust survivor and an Emeritus Professor of Political Science at University of California, Davis. Given those credentials, it is charitable to say that the author in old age lacked the energy to conduct archival research and lost touch with the relevant body of secondary literature.

The first page states: “If the principal agent behind the Nazi policy of extermination was Adolf Hitler, his principal counterparts on the Allied side were Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin Roosevelt.” This astonishing assertion, which ignores the entire Allied war effort from 1939 through 1945, rests on the shopworn argument that Churchill and Roosevelt knew all about the Holocaust as early as 1942 and failed—deliberately—to do anything about it.

Churchill and Roosevelt were often described as philosemitic by people who did not mean it as a compliment. As veteran politicians accustomed to outrageous accusations, neither would be surprised by Groth’s charge, and they might even react with a sardonic grin.

Groth’s style follows the usual modus operandi of conspiracy potboilers. While admitting that “no witnesses or minutes of relevant meetings have ever surfaced,” he says that Churchill’s and Roosevelt’s explicit agreement to downplay the Holocaust is implicit in their pattern of conduct (4). Naturally it follows that all of the abundant examples of Churchill expressing sympathy for the plight of European Jewry during the war must be dismissed as “cynical manipulation” (85).

Groth’s biggest failing, however, is simply ignoring (or being ignorant of?) any evidence that gainsays his argument. While he does refer to “well-known historian of the Holocaust, Martin Gilbert,” he omits the fact that Gilbert is also Churchill’s official biographer.

Groth says Churchill and Roosevelt never diverted so much as one aircraft to bomb the concentration camps or the railway lines leading to them. If, however, Groth ever bothered to read Martin Gilbert’s 2007 monograph, Churchill and the Jews, a book he never mentions, he would have learned of Churchill’s response in July 1944 to the intelligence that Hungarian Jews were then being deported to Auschwitz: “Get everything out of the Air Force you can and invoke me if necessary.”

There is much more evidence supported by archives to demolish Groth’s foolishness, but rather than go on, I suggest you simply do what Groth has not: Read Sir Martin’s excellent book, or read his Lecture, “Churchill and the Holocaust,” on the Centre website at http://bit.ly/whT6aV. 

December 1941 Again…

**CHRISTOPHER H. STERLING**


**December 1941: 31 Days That Changed America and Saved the World**, by Craig Shirley. Thomas Nelson, hardbound, illus., 646 pp., $24.95, member price $20.

Historian Weintraub has published a host of books, many about World War II. Here he treats fairly well-known ground: the initial part of Churchill’s first trips to Washington and Ottawa after Pearl Harbor. While this brief account does not center on Churchill, WSC is a primary player in a fascinating cast. Nor does the author stick only with the final days of December. More background may be needed for the many readers who lack the historical context.

The retired Penn State professor skillfully melds personal scenes with a broader sense of military (and political) change, beginning with Churchill’s arrival in Washington. FDR had sought to put off his visitor, because the Americans had barely begun to consider their own war strategy, but Churchill pressed and won. Around that homely setting of Churchill as house guest, Weintraub describes the collapsing Allied position in Asia and the Pacific, and the Russo-German struggle.

Many of these scenes are familiar from multiple earlier accounts—Churchill’s “heart incident” while opening a White House window, his speeches in Congress and in Ottawa, the two leaders attending church, something neither of them regularly did.

Weintraub’s command of detail makes for compelling reading, but he is telling a story rather than providing serious historical analysis. And he gets in a few digs along the way, making acerbic
comments about Churchill’s decisions to reinforce Singapore and Hong Kong. Hindsight is a great thing. Yet this is a readable picture of a dark period when victory seemed far off.

Craig Shirley’s much longer book (sporting nearly ninety pages of notes, but amazingly no index) is very different from Weintraub’s, and far less enlightening. The author’s focus, as the somewhat over-the-top subtitle suggests, is how strife in Europe and the Pacific expanded into a true World War in one month. He loves to make statements about something lasting “forever” or having “never happened before.” Some are even true.

Shirley declares that he wants “to make the reader feel as if they are [sic] experiencing the day-to-day events as they unfolded.” Each day of the month gets its own chapter, and as one might expect, those covering December 7th/8th are the longest. Churchill, a bit player, appears once early and then for his Washington trip. The narrative—quite readable in places—is based on extensive mining of period newspapers and magazines, many of them from small towns.

But the overall result is a mass of bits and pieces—too many of them inaccurate, or marred by poor editing or proofreading. It seems there is no factoid or cliché too minor to include; one rapidly gets lost in the weeds of trivia. This book was an interesting concept, fatally weakened by the author’s errors and inability to stick to a theme. Instead, we learn a bazillion little facts, few of them important or enlightening, many simply distracting. Yet despite its length and numbing details, the book adds virtually nothing to our knowledge of Winston Churchill.

Bluntly put: save your money. &

...And Again!

MANFRED WEIDHORN


A few days in May 1940 saw a fateful juncture in history: While Nazi forces raced to the English Channel, Britain decided to fight on. In December 1941 the spotlight shifted from Churchill to Hitler—and an equally consequential decision.

Scholarly and well written, this book traces that moment when “WW2” was born, as the war became global. In tracking decisions in key capitals and battlefronts, Mawdsley gives a sense of the drama, the political chess, the colossal sum of human suffering.

His approach produces interesting symmetries. Before attacking Europe’s Pacific possessions, Japan wanted a German commitment to help, even as Britain was seeking greater American backing. When, on December 5th, Hitler agreed to support Japan against the U.S., he underestimated Russian and American resources, just as the U.S. government underestimated Japan’s daring.

And what daring! Hitler’s way of making war is often referred to as “blitzkrieg” (a word he apparently did not like), but for surprising tactics and massive scale, no one can match the Japanese. Within a few days they conquered Malaya, Thailand, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Guam, even while making a completely unexpected and brilliantly executed hit and run attack on Hawaii in a bid to disable the U.S. in one blow. Planned by the worldly and accomplished Admiral Yamamoto, it was—in the short run—one of the most ingenious military strokes in history.

Devoting 300 pages to a dozen days is like using a magnifying glass to clarify matters which comprehensive histories cover lightly. Mawdsley steers clear of sweeping assessments, but he does allow for some value judgments. The main one comes in just two words near the end of the book: “Germany’s cause would not be helped by the fact that in the later campaigns a military amateur of fanatical temperament had taken charge of its army” (my italics). Those two words touch on the burning question of why the Allies won.

Some believe that his racist obsessions made the Führer unable to analyze a problem with rational self-interest. I have argued (“The Fall of 1941,” Historically Speaking, 2010) rather the case for hubris: Hitler was one of the great risk-takers; his early triumphs against all advice made him trust only his own intuition. The two ideas, of course, are not mutually exclusive.

This speculation about Hitler’s psychology is prompted by his ignoring, when invading Russia, the World War I lesson about a two-front war, and then recklessly starting a war with the U.S. while Russia and Britain were unsubdued. He admitted in early December that the Russian front was “not so good” and Rommel was retreating in Africa. A rational person would have waited for the situation to clear before plunging into the unknown. Perhaps he wished to declare war lest the U.S. do so first; perhaps he didn’t want to appear outclassed by the “racially inferior” Japanese.

In one of his few other value judgments, Mawdsley holds that FDR, while mishandling the confrontation with Japan, shrewdly ignored advice from his officials to declare war on Germany; by letting Hitler do the dirty work, he was free to pursue a “Europe first” policy. In any case, on December 11th, whether because of ideology, hubris or something else, Hitler made a huge down payment for his eventual suicide.
Each quiz includes four questions in six categories: Churchill contemporaries (C), literary matters (L), miscellaneous (M), personal details (P), statesmanship (S) and war (W), the easier questions first. Can you reach Level 1?

LEVEL 4
1. Clementine: “[Chartwell is] closed and there will be no-one to cook for you.” WSC: “I shall cook for myself. I can boil an —. I’ve seen it done.” Fill in the blank. (P)

2. Of whom did Churchill write: “For years I had read every word he spoke and what the newspapers said about him”? (P)

3. Les Grands Contemporains is the French title of which Churchill book? (L)

4. “My greatest address was to an audience of one during a rainstorm in a gazebo at Blenheim.” Who was the audience? (P)

5. What did WSC refer to when he wrote: “The greatest armada that ever left our shores set out for the coast of France”? (W)

6. “After the end of the World War of 1914 there was a deep conviction and almost universal hope that peace would reign in the world.” This is the first sentence in which of WSC’s books? (L)

LEVEL 3
7. Who wrote to Churchill on 11 September 1939, “I am glad you did the Marlboro [sic] volumes before this thing started…”? (L)

8. WSC wrote: “The assassin’s bullet had wrought more evil to the United States than all the Confederate cannonade.” How did it? (W)

9. Whom did journalist A.G. Gardiner describe in 1913: “He is always unconsciously playing a part—an heroic part. And he is himself the most astonished spectator. He sees himself moving through the smoke of battle—triumpant, terrible, his brow clothed with thunder, his legions looking to him for victory, and not looking in vain.”? (M)

10. Over champagne on 10 May 1940, R.A. Butler told John Colville that “the good clean tradition of English politics…has been sold to the greatest adventurer of modern political history.” To whom was Butler referring? (C)

11. Churchill said on 12 October 1942: “He sees with chagrin and amazement that our defeats are but stepping-stones to victory, and that his victories are only the stepping-stones to ruin.” Who is “he”? (W)

12. Which American broadcaster wrote of WSC’s election victory in 1951: “The people voted their apprehensions of the future and their memories of the past.” (S)

LEVEL 2
13. One of the “Morals of the Work” in Churchill’s The Second World War was “In Peace: —.” Provide the missing word. (S)

14. What inspired WSC to broadcast in 1952: “I, whose youth was passed in the august, unchallenged and tranquil glories of the Victorian Era, may well feel a thrill in invoking, once more, the prayer and the Anthem, ‘God Save the Queen!’”? (C)

15. Which U.S. President said this of WSC?: “History recalls his greatness in ways no dictator will ever know. And he left us a message of hope for the future.” (S)

LEVEL 1
16. A. G. Gardiner described The River War as “one of the best military books in the language.” How old was the author when the book was published? (L)

17. WSC to his wife, 18 April 1912: “The — disaster is the prevailing theme here [the Admiralty]…The strict observance of the great tradition of the sea towards women and children reflects nothing but honour upon our civilization.” Which disaster? (M)

18. Who wrote this of Churchill?: “I myself never much minded having my head bitten off, because I knew that instead of throwing it into the waste-paper-basket, he would very soon be fitting it back on my neck with care and even with ceremony.” (C)

19. Name at least one of the seven American States which granted Churchill honorary citizenship shortly before he was granted honorary U.S. citizenship in 1963. (M)

20. Which failed campaigns did WSC mean when he wrote of May 1940: “It was a marvelous that I survived and maintained my position in public esteem and Parliamentary confidence”? (W)

21. Of whom did Churchill write in January 1941: “He was a crumbling lighthouse from which there shone the beams that led great fleets to harbour”? (C)

22. In his speech at Mansion House on 19 February 1919, WSC famously referred to the support being given to those Russian armies which were “fighting the foul — of Bolshevism.” Supply the missing alliterative word. (M)

23. In Egypt in February 1945, to whom did WSC say this: “...that my rule of life prescribed as an absolutely sacred rite smoking of cigars and also the drinking of alcohol before, after, and if need be during all meals and in the intervals between them.” (P)

24. To whom did WSC write this: “Un teaches, from infancy to tomb—there is the first & main characteristic of mankind.” (S)

ANSWERS

1. Egg.
2. His father, Lord Randolph Churchill.
3. Great Contemporaries.
4. Peace: Goodwill.
5. Operation Overlord, the invasion of Normandy on 6 June 1944.
7. President Franklin Roosevelt. WSC: “I refused the bullet in the head of the Pope.”
8. The death of Abraham Lincoln.
9. The sinking of the Titanic.
10. Fraudulent elections in Russia.
11. The Orange Revolution in Ukraine.
12. "J.B. " John Bull." (M)
audiences that this was a long way from
the real Burton, for “I’m the son of a
Welsh miner”), he was implicitly under-
mining the idea of Churchill as an epic
figure, though that was certainly what
his Churchill voice actually sounded
like. And anyway the famous Sellers
impersonation that he was surely refer-
ing to, “Party Political Broadcast,” was
based on Anthony Eden and did not
sound remotely like either Churchill
himself or Burton’s version of him.
The problem was, as Burton told
Kenneth Tynan in 1967, “I am the son
of a Welsh miner and one would expect
me to be at my happiest playing peas-
ants, people of the earth. But in actual
fact I am happier playing princes and
kings....” He was in fact unhappy being
Churchill partly because he had found
himself in a tyrannical, domineering per-
son—quite right for the part but hard to
live with and not the way he liked to
think of himself.
This inner dichotomy came suddenly
and damagingly to the surface when in
1974 he was cast as Churchill [in The
Gathering Storm]. Actually appearing as
Churchill rather than merely providing a
voice for his words clearly upset Burton
greatly, though by this stage of his life
his drinking problem was beginning to
overwhelm him anyway and his
processes of thought were at times
affected by it.
Just a few days before the pro-
gramme was to be shown on both
British and American television, inter-
views with Burton appeared in the
American press in which he confessed
that “to play Churchill is to hate him”
and asked himself what the son of a
Welsh miner was doing in a celebration
of a man who was the enemy of his class
and his nation, a “toy soldier child” who
had never grown up and (thought
Burton the actor) was himself always
playing a role. He now recalled that
meeting Churchill had been “like a blow
under the heart,” so overwhelming was
his presence. “I cannot pretend other-
wise, though my class and his hate each
other to the seething point.”
A few days later, by which stage he
was under severe attack in both coun-
tries, receiving shoals of (unanswered)
letters of complaint from friends like
Robert Hardy, and had been banned
from BBC Drama for life, he went even
further: “Churchill has fascinated me
since childhood—a bogeyman who
hated us, the mining class, motivelessly.
He ordered a few of us to be shot, you
know, and the orders were carried out.”
So even in the week of his centenary, the
myth of Tontypandy was still around to
haunt Churchill’s memory.
Burton too was of course playing a
part here, for his lifestyle was now way
beyond the comprehension of Welsh
miners. Jack Le Vien was quick to point
out that Burton’s new views had
nothing in common with the admiration
for Churchill that he had expressed
in all their previous conversations, the
most recent only a month earlier, that
Burton had a Churchill bust which was
one of his “most treasured possessions,”
and that he had recently met both
Clementine Churchill and Churchill’s
grandson and told both of them how
much he admired “the old man.”
In the Commons, Conservative MPs
were outraged. Norman Tebbit, just
then gearing up for his life’s work as the
polecat of parliamentary and tabloid
inventive, observed that this was “merely
an actor past his peak indulging in a fit
of pique, jealousy and ignorant
comment.” Neville Trotter spoke for
rather more of the silent majority with
the measured avowal that “if there were
more Churchills and fewer Burtons we
would be in a very much better
country.”
As his career and life deteriorated
around him and the fog of alcohol
descended, Burton was trying desper-
ately to play the man he had been long
ago, and he at least knew what young
Welshmen had been expected to believe
about Winston Churchill. He was not
asked to play either part again.
(Ramsden refers to the Burton biog-
raphies by Ferris and Bragg.)

Why Did Burton Do It?
From FH 32, Winter 1974-75, p. 3:

Richard Burton has just given two of
the oddest, most contradictory per-
formances of his career. Both involved
his portrayal of Winston Churchill in
The Gathering Storm....The prologue
consisted of two articles by the actor in
Mr. Burton put on a good show as
Winston Churchill, a bad show as
Richard Burton. His intemperately anti-
Churchill articles appeared on the
weekend prior to the November 29th
NBC broadcast in the United States. As
a result of their publication, Mr. Burton
has been banned from the BBC. The
Times article was the more vitriolic.
Headlined simply, “To Play Churchill Is
to Hate Him,” it unleashed Mr.
Burton’s petulant storm of spleen.
—Quoted from “Viewing Things,”
by John Beaufort, The Christian Science
Monitor, 9 December 1974. Burton’s
New York Times article appeared
on Sunday, 24 November 1974. A .pdf file
(along with rejoinders by Sir Robert
Rhodes James, Sir Anthony Montague
Browne and Jack Le Vien) is available
from the editor by email.
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