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Despatch Box

The Role of the State

In a fine exposition of Churchill’s turn from youthful radicalism to mature conservatism (FH 155:13) Andrew Roberts is somewhat carried away by his enthusiasm for the change. In fact, the change was not so drastic. Did Churchill in his later phases call for the abolition of old age pensions and the National Health Service? If he did not, he was, especially on the latter, to the left of today’s Democratic Party.

Mr. Roberts cites the influence of Friedrich Hayek’s The Road to Serfdom, a book often cited but apparently little read. It was a polemic against democratic socialism, which the author considered an oxymoron—but not against the Welfare State. Indeed Hayek actually sounds downright like a modern liberal (definitive ed., 87-88, 148-49):

Nor is the preservation of competition incompatible with an extensive system of social services...The functioning of a competition not only requires adequate organization of certain institutions like money, markets, and channels of information—some of which can never be adequately provided by private enterprise...Where it is impracticable to make the enjoyment of certain services dependent on the payment of a price, competition will not produce the services...[and] these tasks provide, indeed, a wide and unquestioned field for state activity....The case for the state’s helping to organize a comprehensive system of social insurance is very strong.

Mr. Roberts also refers to Adam Smith, another iconic conservative figure much misunderstood. Smith repeatedly referred to rich people as greedy and irresponsible and to businessmen as untrustworthy and immoral. In short, when Mr. Roberts uses the term “free market” in connection with Hayek or Churchill, it does not have the same meaning as it does for Ayn Rand and Milton Friedman.

The key point is that what Roberts says about Churchill in the 1950s—“he was more interested in foreign than domestic affairs”—actually is true of Churchill from 1911 on (except somewhat during the Exchequer years). The conclusion is not that Churchill underwent a conversion from hard left to hard right, but that he drifted to moderate. He under-
It is not a myth that Churchill’s term for his depressive episodes was “Black Dog.” Churchill’s high levels of productivity, creativity and effectiveness do belie a clinical diagnosis of profound major depression or severe manic-depression, but lesser diagnoses run a spectrum from “the blues” to cyclothymia.

The Dukes of Marborough suffered from intense melancholia and Churchill’s father had severe mood swings, suggesting a hereditary and biochemical predisposition. Ismay, Bracken, Beaverbrook and Randolph Churchill noted WSC’s serious mood swings. Beaverbrook said: “What a creature of strange moods Winston Churchill is—always at the top of the wheel of confidence or at the bottom of an intense depression.”

Lord Brain, his neurologist, thought Churchill to have cyclothymia, a mood disorder. Churchill’s mood swings were significant but do not seem to reach the threshold of clinical bipolar disorder. Research on mental impairments has demonstrated strong associations with the artistic temperament. The riddle of Churchill’s successful coping with his mood swings and depression may include his devotion to writing and passion for painting, besides his preoccupations with challenging work.


JOHN H. MATHER, M.D., WASHINGTON

NBC’s Olympic Blitz

In its lead up to the Olympics on Saturday, 11 August, NBC ran a special, “Their Finest Hour,” narrated by Tom Brokaw, reprising the undoubted heroism of Britons during the Blitz. But a commentator, Jon Meacham, called Churchill a “failed politician...not trusted by the Royal Family.” He also trotted out a supposed quote by Roosevelt: “Well, I suppose he’s the best man England has, even if he is drunk half of the time.” Is there a modicum of truth in this, or is it just the standard bashing of a great figure by a news network? I was incensed.

JEREMY SLAUBAUGH, LATHAM, N.Y.

Editor’s response: I thought Brokaw’s production was superb, and I am usually the worst critic of these productions. All they had wrong was where Churchill heard about Pearl Harbor and removing “and its Commonwealth” from the Finest Hour speech.

Jon Meacham (whose book, Franklin and Winston, is a standard work) is not all wrong. Churchill was, in 1939, a “failed politician” by most yardsticks (see Robert Rhodes James’s Churchill: A Study in Failure 1900-1939). The Royal Family didn’t trust him. Roosevelt did say he was “drunk half the time.” Churchill’s private secretary, John Colville, who came over from Chamberlain, wrote on 10 May 1940: “I spent the day in a bright blue new suit from the Fifty-Shilling Tailors, cheap and sensational looking, which I felt was appropriate to the new Government.”

In short order they all learned differently. Meacham himself says at the end, “If it hadn’t been for Churchill we would be living in a different and worse world.”

Canadian 2 Corps in Britain, had already contacted Montgomery, writing on 5 February 1942:

...I believe that occasions will increasingly present themselves for small raids across the Channel opposite the Army front. I consider that it would be in the general interest if a very high proportion of these prospective raids, if not the total, should be undertaken by detachments from the Canadian Corps....In default of a reputation built up in battle, the Corps undoubtedly would receive great stimulus if, in the near future, it succeeded in making a name for itself for its raiding activities.

SIDNEY ALLINSON, VICTORIA, B.C.

Mr. Reardon replies: Everyone knew Canadians stationed in Britain were chafing to come to grips with the enemy. General Crerar, the Canadian Corps Commander, was prominent among them, but he did not have the authority to offer Canadian troops without approval. The specific approval process for the Dieppe operation was that Montgomery approached Crerar, who was enthusiastic. Montgomery then approached General Andy McNaughton, Commander of the Canadian troops. McNaughton was also supportive, but he had authority to approve only minor operations. Since this was not a minor operation, he cabled the Canadian War Committee in Ottawa, which provided approval.

The Ingredients of Character

I have enjoyed Churchill on multiple levels, as a historical figure, as a fine writer, and as an orator whose grasp of the English language was equaled in his day by fellow writer C.S. Lewis. Both knew the power of the written word and spoken word. Churchill had honed his skills with the language to a level few ever attain.

As a boy scout leader, I believe what really paved the way for Churchill to achieve greatness was a single word: character. He had what Hitler lacked, and what Stalin never desired. That character was based on courage, daring, resolve and composure. On the field of battle, his courage was staggering, and his daring to try the untried was enviable. His unabated resolve through difficulties was admired by friend and foe; his composure denoted a person who was levelheaded and difficult to unnerv.

MAJ. JESSE J. CARNES, VIA EMAIL

Who Authorized Dieppe?

It was interesting to read Terry Reardon’s fine summary of Winston Churchill and the raid on Dieppe (FH 154:32-36). However, it may be misleading to say “Montgomery approached the Canadian Army Chief, General McNaughton, for a division to form the main part of the force.” It would seem the initial approach was the other way round. Gen. H.D. Crerar, Commander of
National Treasure
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, SEPTEMBER 15TH—Lady Soames, last of Sir Winston and Lady Churchill’s five children and our Patron since 1985, celebrated her 90th birthday with her family. “I have no idea what they have planned,” she told the Evening Standard. What was planned was what daughter Emma called “a majorly noisy, joyous lunch of Soamesian proportions” at the home of her brother Rupert. “How lucky we all are to have such a benign, loving mother and grandmother who has lived an extraordinary life,” Emma continued. “She is the woman for whom the word matriarch was coined.”

Reflections for Voters
LONDON, JULY 2ND—Randolph Churchill sends us one of those ringing Churchill quotations which always cause us to think we should write them down or spread them around. Written in 1917 by A. McCallum Scott, the first Churchill biographer, it was noted by Michael Howard in The Spectator, 30 June 2012, in a review of Peter Hennessy’s Distilling the Frenzy: Writing the History of One’s Own Times:

“As we were leaving the House last night, he called me into the Commons to take a last look round. All was darkness except a ring of faint light around the gallery. We could dimly see the table but walls and roof were invisible. ‘Look at it,’ he said. ‘This little place is what makes the difference between us and Germany. It is in virtue of this that we shall muddle through to success and for lack of this Germany’s brilliant efficiency leads her to final destruction. This little room is the shrine of the world’s liberties.’”

As often as we criticize our representatives and institutions, Churchill reminds us of what life would be like without them. The best part of Hennessy’s book, Howard writes, is its quotations. That one for certain.

Lessons for Candidates
LOS ANGELES, AUGUST 19TH—The Los Angeles Times asked a varied group of writers to recommend books which the U.S. presidential candidates could profit from reading. We knew we could count on the Churchillian writer Mark Helprin for contributing the following:

“There is about as much chance of a presidential candidate profitably reading a real book in the heat of a campaign as there is of a horse in the home stretch of the Kentucky Derby suddenly turning to the Talmud. But let’s say the whole world was on drugs, and one did. He might best fill the vacuum of his lack of contemplation if he read Randolph Churchill’s and Martin Gilbert’s magisterial, 8600-page biography Winston S. Churchill, and perhaps some of the sixteen companion volumes, carefully.

“In the long life of an extraordinarily courageous, deeply educated, spiritually generous literary genius who held thirteen cabinet posts, won the Nobel Prize

Ninety Years On! For a larger view of this photograph and identities of all in it, see the Evening Standard web page: http://xrl.us/8NRW2y.
“Young Winston”
Simon Ward 1942-2012

LONDON, JULY 20TH— Simon Ward gained fame with his remarkable portrayal of “Young Winston” in 1972. He starred as “Sir Monty” in the BBC legal drama “Judge John Deed,” and as Bishop Gardiner in “The Tudors.” He also had a role on the big screen in “Zulu Dawn.”

A statement from his agents said: “The son of a car salesman from Beckenham, Kent, Ward wanted to be an actor from an early age, joined the National Youth Theatre at the age of 13, and stayed there for eight years. Ward went on to train at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts and became one of the most respected and admired actors of his generation. His big break in the theatre came in 1967 when he played the lead in Joe Orton’s play ‘Loot,’ which led to television and film work. ‘Young Winston’ brought him international prominence and Ward starred in many high-profile films throughout the Seventies and Eighties.” (See review, page 46.)

Mr. Ward leaves his wife Alexandra, three daughters, and fond memories among those who enjoyed his work. Dead at 70. R.I.P.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Note: The Advocate refers to a “splendid article” on the 1942 Churchill visit in Humanities, the National Endowment for the Humanities magazine (http://xrl.us/bnj3av), which should be read with caution—Roosevelt did not “pledge” a 1942 Second Front to Molotov)—but it is generally a good summary of Churchill’s visit.

Douglass-Churchill Ties
WASHINGTON, JUNE 27TH— Michigan’s Hillsdale College is a famous name, but few probably realize its interesting history. I recently visited their D.C. campus, The Kirby Center, and chatted with Hillsdale President Larry P. Arnn. Among the things I learned:

• An abolitionist college founded prior to the Civil War, Hillsdale was the first of its kind to have a non-discrimination policy within its founding charter. Associated with the anti-slavery cause, Hillsdale boasted the second largest percentage of students (outside of military colleges) to serve for the Union in the Civil War.

• Frederick Douglass, the famed former slave who was a powerful voice against the practice, visited Hillsdale in early 1863 to give a speech to the Ladies Literary Society. “We paid him $55, and made $110 at the gate,” Arnn said.

• Arnn himself is an interesting figure, having once served as an assistant to Sir Martin Gilbert, the official biographer of Sir Winston Churchill. “The college is the publisher of that great official biography now,” Arnn said, “and I met my wife working in [Sir Martin Gilbert’s] house.”

Dr. Arnn is also a longtime associate of and collaborator with The Churchill Centre, and has spoken at its conferences. For links to the full conversation and podcasts on iTunes please see: http://xrl.us/bnc3th.

—MAT K. LEWIS IN THE DAILY CALLER
Bracken House Sun God
LONDON, JULY 4TH— Gordon Atwell posted photographs of the unique transom at Bracken House, in which Brendan Bracken’s mentor and friend is artfully worked into the zodiac sun: (http://gigapan.com/gigapans/4280/).

Bracken House is named for the founder of the Financial Times and longtime Churchill ally, the wartime Minister of Information Brendan Bracken. The zodiac design by Philip Bentham is in gilt metal and enamel.

Finest Hour 63 reviewed the two Bracken biographies by Andrew Boyle and Charles Lysaght. Mr. Lysaght later wrote “Brendan Bracken: The Fantasist Whose Dreams Came True” in Finest Hour 113, Winter 2001-02, on our website at http://xrl.us/bnfgkc.

Death by Chocolate
LONDON, JULY 17TH— A World War II plot to kill Winston Churchill with a bar of exploding chocolate has been revealed in historic papers. Adolf Hitler’s bomb makers coated explosive devices with a thin layer of rich dark chocolate, then packaged them in expensive-looking black and gold paper. The Germans apparently planned to use secret agents working in Britain discreetly to place the bars, branded “Peters Chocolate,” among luxury items taken into a dining room used by the War Cabinet. The lethal slabs were packed with enough explosives to kill anyone within several metres.

The plot was foiled by British spies who discovered the chocolate was being made and tipped off one of MI5’s senior intelligence chiefs, Lord [Victor] Rothschild, a scientist and key member of the famous banking family. Rothschild asked an illustrator in his unit to draw poster-size images of the chocolate, to warn the public to be on the look-out.

Lord Rothschild’s 4 May 1943 letter to artist Laurence Fish, written from his bunker in Parliament Street, was unearthed by Fish’s wife, journalist Jean Bray, as she sorted through his possessions after the artist’s death at the age of 89 in 2009. Marked secret, it reads: “Dear Fish, I wonder if you could do a drawing for me of an explosive slab of chocolate….When you break off a piece of chocolate at one end in the normal way, instead of it falling away, a piece of canvas is revealed stuck into the middle of the piece which has been broken off and is sticking into the middle of the remainder of the slab.”

The letter explained how the mechanism would be activated when the piece of chocolate was pulled sharply, which would also pull the canvas, and Lord Rothschild said he was enclosing a “very poor sketch” done by someone who had seen one of the bars. He asked Fish to indicate in the text on his drawing that a bomb would go off seven seconds after piece of canvas was pulled out.

—Rosa Silverman, Daily Telegraph

Emerging in Tears
NEW YORK, AUGUST 5TH— Tens of thousands of people have been flocking to the Morgan Library and Museum in New York (FH 155:36) for a glimpse of rare memorabilia representing Churchill as an orator and writer.

The displays, including Churchill’s handwritten notes and annotations on some of his famous speeches which lifted people’s spirits during the nation’s darkest hours, have been drawing unprecedented crowds.

More than 30,000 have so far passed by the rarely seen displays—a 50% increase in visitor numbers, a success which has shocked even the curator.

 Declan Kiely of the Morgan Library told the Sunday Telegraph: “It’s been thrilling to witness the unprecedented emotional engagement and visceral response of many visitors, some of whom emerge openly weeping after listening to Churchill’s speeches.”

This would not surprise Churchill, who unashamedly wept at scenes of great courage amidst the Blitz. But it is remarkable to hear this of jaded New Yorkers, who have not seen the face of war the way Britons did—though perhaps Churchill reminded them of their own gritty performance after 9/11.

Strait-Jacketed!
LONDON, JULY 19TH— In what were described as “guerrilla raids,” BBC Channel 4 “straitjacketed” the statues of four great Britons: Winston Churchill and Florence Nightingale in London, Charles Darwin in Shrewsbury and Samuel Johnson in Lichfield.

Each figure was “restrained” in a bespoke straitjacket which had the mental illness they are reputed to have had stamped across it. Churchill’s was labeled DEPRESSION.

The strait-jacketing was carried out to promote Channel 4’s season of prime-time programming challenging mental health stigma and discrimination, “4 Goes Mad,” which started on Monday 23 July. The stunt was also captured as part of a short film aired on BBC4’s “Random Acts.” Commissioning Editor Lina Prestwood said:

“Despite the fact one in four of us are likely to experience a mental health condition in our lifetime, misunderstanding and stigma persists.”

We agree that Channel 4 has gone mad, but
“Churchillian Drift” (FH 155:9) continues. In July Donald Trump Tweeted the Churchill red herring. “However beautiful the strategy you should occasionally look at the results.” Not to be outdone, Minnesota Vikings running back Adrian Peterson, after release from an arrest in Houston, declared, “A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on.” Sports writer Ray Ratto wrote: “I tried to figure out whether he was a history major; watches PBS a lot, has a nerd posse or has an agent or publicist who watches the Military Channel between Kardashian developments.” As we advised Ratto, Mr. Peterson was quoting Churchill no better than Mr. Trump. Perhaps we should start a new Twitter page called @ErsatzChurchill.

*****

The London Olympics closing ceremony, a jolly good show, reincarnated Sir Winston, played by actor Timothy Spall, who read from Shakespeare’s The Tempest atop a replica St. Stephen’s Tower (which houses Big Ben). Spall, who played Peter Pettigrew, the rat-turned-man in Harry Potter, and WSC in The King’s Speech, always overplays Churchill. This made him perfect for the job, and better than the image of John Lennon, singing “Imagine there’s no countries” before the assembled flags of 204 countries. We preferred the majestic rendering of God Save The Queen. *****

Beatles, Beatles: In a spoof “biography” of Paul McCartney in February 2012, Eddie Izzard said McCartney, the son of Jacques Cousteau and Katherine Hepburn, grew up near the water: “Winston Churchill, who was a family friend—and brilliant deep sea diver—bought Paul his first fishing rod….Paul found that by holding his fishing rod in a particular way, he could play fishing rod solid-air guitar, which impressed Churchill a lot. Some say that watching McCartney play on a fishing rod in 1962 encouraged Churchill to record ‘Ferry Across the Mersey,’ which was a big hit in the UK and America for Churchill and The Few. But with time on his hands, Paul found that with a little imagination, he could rewire his fishing rod and make it into a working guitar, which he did in 1962.” And the rest is history….

*****

Nassau County, New York Executive Edward P. Mangano announced the approval of a $93 million complex in downtown Mineola, Long Island that will provide housing for working young professionals and affordable housing for the elderly. The young professionals will get a five-story, 275-unit apartment building known as “The Winston.” Seasoned citizens will have a four-story, 36-unit building known as “The Churchill.” The choice of names pleases us. Yuppies will have the model of young Winston, charging headlong with worlds to conquer; while their seniors will have old Winston, who never gave in, never, never, never….

*****

“Bill Kristol would like to remind you of Winston Churchill’s rabid bigotry.” Thus David Graham in The Atlantic, September 21st, after Kristol, editor of The Weekly Standard, published (its umpteenth occurrence since 9/11) Churchill’s 1899 remarks about Islam in The River War: “How dreadful are the curses which Mohammedanism lays on its votaries!” Never the voice of reason over Churchill (see “The Atlantic Takes a Dive,” FH 113, http://xrl.us/bf47u), the magazine also drags out the shibboleth that Churchill caused the 1943 Bengal famine. We wonder how Mr. Graham would explain his claim that it is “rabid bigotry” to insist, as Churchill did, that women not be owned by men. ⚫

PM and President about each other whilst admiring the other Epstein White House bust.

Bush, to the British Embassy, where it has remained ever since (FH 142:7-8, FH144:4). Now columnist Jake Tapper has revealed that there is still a Churchill bust in the White House! It’s been there all along—and it’s also by Jacob Epstein. (See http://xrl.us/bnhlwm.)

This other Epstein, in the White House residence, was a gift to the White House (not to any one president) by the British Embassy during the Johnson >>
Administration (1963-69). We are not making this up.

Nor was the Bush Oval Office bust returned specifically by Obama. James Barbour, British Embassy press secretary, told Tapper it was “lent to the George W. Bush Administration from the UK’s government art collection, for the duration of the presidency.” White House curator William Allman said in 2010 that the decision to return it had been made before Obama even arrived. “It was already scheduled to go back.”

In fact, Obama was offered an extended loan and declined. James Barbour added: “The White House collection has its own Epstein bust of Churchill, which President Obama showed to Prime Minister Cameron when he visited the White House in March…. [Now] let’s get on and focus on seeing who wins most medals in the Olympics.”

Amen to that. And thanks to Jake Tapper, who writes: “How did I figure out what was really going on? I never gave in, never, never, never, never. In nothing great or small, large or petty.”

**Brand’s Brand: Ignorance**

NEW YORK, JULY 6TH—British comedian Russell Brand is not expected to be an expert on history, but when on the American FX Channel today he made the statement, under a large photograph of WSC that had been flashed onto the stage backdrop, that “Churchill massacred Irish people,” the statement won approving applause from his audience.

Brand’s attack was clearly premeditated—hence the photo—and to give Brand his due he did preface it with a positive statement about Churchill’s contribution to victory in the Second World War. But what puzzled me was the enthusiastic reaction of the audience numbering several hundred people.

They obviously did not know that “Churchill massacred Irish people”—not least because he didn’t—but now they think they do. To mix up Churchill and Cromwell, which is presumably what Brand and the picture researcher and producer did, is pretty moronic, of course. But why did not a single person in an audience constantly encouraged to interact and even heckle, point out the fact? The two-syllable names start and end with the same letters, but there, surely, the similarities end, especially with regard to Irish policy.

All this simply underlines, of course, what an enormous task The Churchill Centre has in front of it.

—Andrew Roberts

**Churchill’s Land Rover**

A Land Rover built for Sir Winston’s 80th birthday was sold for a whopping £129,000 at auction in Cambridgeshire. It was modified to enable WSC to be chauffeur-driven around Chartwell and has an extra-wide passenger seat and heated footwell. [One ignorant writer said the seat was for Sir Winston’s “ample bottom.” In fact it was to enable him to get in and out more easily.—Ed.]

Cheffins auctioneers sold the vehicle, kept in a shed for more than thirty years, in Sutton on 20 October. The original buff logbook shows the 1954 Series I Land Rover was registered as UKE 80 in the name of the “Rt Hon Sir Winston Spencer Churchill KG OM CH MP, Chartwell, Westerham, Kent.” A Land Rover representative at the time said “UKE” stood for UK and Empire.

The vehicle became the property of Churchill’s son-in-law, Christopher Soames, later Lord Soames, a few months after WSC’s death in January 1965. It was purchased for £160 in a 1973 sale of farm equipment and was sold on-the-spot for twice the price. Its new owner used it to transport a horse box for some time before consigning it to a shed in 1977. In the intervening years it occasionally appeared at charity events in the Kent area. A spokesman for Cheffins said the Land Rover has only 12,932 miles (20,812 km) on the odometer.—BBC News 6

“**I Loved That Man**”

WARM SPRINGS, GA., SEPTEMBER 15TH—Dr. Tom Wentland of Columbus, Georgia portrayed Winston Churchill in “FDR: I Love That Man” at Roosevelt’s “Little White House” this weekend. Wentland, who taught at Columbus State University, has portrayed Franklin Roosevelt to great acclaim at Warm Springs for over a decade. As Churchill, he spoke of the friendship between the two giants of history. In addition, Kelly’s Zeroes and the Fort Gordon Signal Corps Museum provided living history as a paratroop unit preparing to jump into Holland in 1944.

The event, sponsored by the non-profit Friends of Roosevelt’s Little White House, is unique in the fact that a best-selling author, an actor portrayal and living history will be held in one
Churchill’s Infallibility: The Myth about the Myth

LONDON, JULY 10TH—Daniel Knowles (“Time to scotch the myth of Winston Churchill’s infallibility,” Telegraph Blogfeed, http://xrl.us/bnge7y) says the “national myth” of World War II and Churchill “is being used in an argument about the future of the House of Lords.”

Knowles quoted Liberal Party leader Nick Clegg, who cited Churchill’s 1910 hope that the Lords “would be fair to all parties,” and Sir Winston’s grandson, Nicholas Soames MP, who replied that Churchill “dropped those views and had great reverence and respect for the institution of the House of Lords….But it doesn’t matter. The basis of this argument is mythology, not history.”

Churchill’s view on the Lords was more nuanced than Clegg stated, and certainly did change after enactment of the 1911 Parliament Act, which WSC helped to pass. (It eliminated the Lords’ veto of money bills, restricted their delay of other bills to two years, and reduced the term of a Parliament to five years: http://xrl.us/bnge78.)

What to do about the House of Lords is a matter for the British people and their representatives. Finest Hour’s task is merely to refute nonsense about Winston Churchill—which we will now respectfully proceed to do, quoting from Mr. Knowles’s treatise:

• “We idolise Churchill because we don’t really know anything about him.”

Only sycophants and the ignorant idolise Churchill. But if they do, it’s not because we know nothing about him—given the longest biography in the history of the planet, his own 15-million-word canon, the million documents in the Churchill Archives, the 100 million words written about him, the 37 million Google hits, and so on. Don’t be silly.

• “His finest hours aside, Winston Churchill was hardly a paragon of progressive thought.”

Churchill’s views were at times so progressive that he was called a traitor to his class. His own Conservative Party never quite trusted him, because they knew he continued to espouse principles of the Liberal Party he had been part of from 1904 to 1924. To cite examples would bore the reader, so let’s simply say that he favored a National Health Service before the 1945 Labour government, and believed in a system of social security before the Labour Party existed.

• “He believed women shouldn’t vote – telling the House of Commons that they are ‘well represented by their fathers, brothers, and husbands.'”

Churchill never said that in the Commons. He wrote it in a private note pasted into his copy of the 1874 Annual Register in 1897, when he was 23—at a time when the majority of British women themselves were opposed to having the vote. Churchill changed his view on women’s suffrage after observing the role women played in World War I—and when he realized, as his daughter later remarked, “how many women would vote for him.”

• “He was fiercely opposed to self-determination for the people of the Empire....”

Was the fierce independence Churchill claimed to admire in Canadians, Boers, Zulus, Australians, Sudanese, New Zealanders and Maoris a sham and a façade then? Or has not Mr. Knowles thought about them? Churchill did have a tic about the early Indian independence movement, with its Brahmin roots. Yet in 1935 he declared that Gandhi had “gone very high in my esteem since he stood up for the Untouchables.” And Churchill was proven right that a premature British exit from India would result in a Hindu-Muslim bloodbath. How many died is still unknown.

• “…advocating the use of poisoned gas against ‘uncivilized tribes’ in Mesopotamia in 1919.”

This Golden Oldie has been refuted repeatedly for twenty years. The term he used was “lachrymatory gas” (tear gas). He was not referring to anything like chlorine. See: http://xrl.us/bnge94

• “His distrust of Hitler was probably motivated by a hatred of Germans.”

Is this the same Churchill who urged that shiploads of food be sent to blockaded Germany after the 1918 armistice, incurring the wrath of fellow politicians who wished to “squeeze Germany until the pigs squeaked”? Is this the man who wrote to his wife in 1945: “...my heart is saddened by the tales of masses of German women and children flying along the roads everywhere in 40-mile long columns to the West before the advancing Armies”? Really, Mr. Knowles should be ashamed of himself.

• “In 1927, he said that Mussolini’s fascism ‘had rendered service to the whole world,’ while Il Duce himself was a ‘Roman genius.’”

Lots of politicians said favorable things about Mussolini after he restored order to a collapsing Italy in the 1920s. Churchill was among the first to realize and to say publicly what Mussolini really was. Churchill wasn’t always right the first time—but he was usually right in the long run.

• “In 1915, he had to resign as First Lord of the Admiralty after the disaster of Gallipoli.” >>
Well, it is our instinctive feeling that opinions by anyone who fails to do basic research only foster a national myth, divorced from reality.

Churchill was not always “a brilliant war leader.” He did help to create the modern welfare state—and warned against its potential excesses. His views on Lords reform are not irrelevant, but they require more study than we read in the Telegraph blogpost. His views on India are still relevant to certain Indians who have written in our pages. (As one of them wrote, the Axis Powers had quite different ideas in mind for India from the old British Raj.)

On female suffrage, ask the women who voted for him. Citing live Telegraph bloggers only muddies the waters.

—EDITOR

Mah Jongg

We are asked if Churchill ever played the traditional Chinese game. His long-time secretary, Eddie Marsh, played the game with the King of Portugal, and may have taught Churchill, who seems to have taken it up during its height of popularity in the 1920s. An amusing account is in Robert Lewis Taylor, Mr. Churchill (1952), 51: “Churchill’s unsatisfactory childhood doubtless gave him an urge to cling to exceptionally youthful ways. Several seasons past, at the height of the English mah-jongg craze, he attended the opening of the play Saint Joan. At a point when the character Dunois stood on the riverbank intoning ‘West Wind, West Wind, West Wind!’ the audience was amazed to hear a hoarse voice crying ‘Pong!’ issue from the dark recesses of the Churchill box.”

Errata

FH 148, page 16: In the chronology of Churchill’s wartime journeys, the second entry under 1943 should read 5 May-5 June. Under 1944, the date 12-23 June should read 20-23 July and should be indented in bold face.

FH 155, page 36: The interactive touch screen pictured is not at the Morgan Library Exhibit but at the Cabinet War Rooms, London. Our apologies for the confusion. ☺
“Berwick” Photographs and “The Pod”

Flight Officer Captain R.G. Buck was an amateur photographer. His collection remained in his family for the seventy years since the flight. The archive includes a signed dinner menu (shrimp cocktail, cold buffet, chicken, ham, beetroot, Bartlett pears with cream and coffee). And there is a cartoon mocking the Luftwaffe for failing to shoot down “Berwick.”

The archive emerged at an Antiques Roadshow program, where it was taken by Buck’s nephew Miles Buck, who lives in the New Zealand north island town of Tauranga. It is being sold by Art and Object in Auckland with an estimate of NZ$23,750, about £12,000.

—CHRIS PARSONS, MAIL ONLINE

The PM’s Flight Pod

In January 2012 it was reported: “Churchill Used In-Flight Pod to Light up, Stay Alive” (http://www.bnnq98b.com). Alas there is much less to this story than the fascinating headline implies.

Of the many technologies developed during World War II, few were as well-intentioned as a strange device designed to allow Churchill to fly in comfort at high altitudes. Churchill’s doctor, Lord Moran, was concerned that if the Prime Minister flew above about 8000 feet, the lack of oxygen would be bad for his heart. Aircraft pressurization—something we take for granted today—was in its very early stages then. None of the aircraft in which Churchill flew before 1945 was pressurized—thus they generally flew below 8000 feet,save for momentary ventures higher to avoid mountains. (For background on Churchill’s wartime air travel and aircraft, see Christopher H. Sterling, “Getting There: Churchill’s Wartime Journeys,” and related articles in Finest Hour 148, Autumn 2010.)

Flying higher was not only safer but more comfortable: there is less turbulence above, say, 20,000 feet. As much to the point, anti-aircraft guns of the period began to lose accuracy as airplane altitudes increased. Thus the wizards at the Institute of Aviation Medicine (part of the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough, west of London) sought a means of allowing the Prime Minister to fly at greater altitude.

As Churchill’s Avro York transport “Ascalon” was coming into service in mid-1943, IAM technicians created what Jerrard Tickell called a “transparent, sarcophagus-like container inside which Mr. Churchill was expected to repose, work, smoke and sleep in flight. It was pressurized and had an elaborate intercom system.” (See Tickell, Ascalon: The Story of Sir Winston Churchill’s Wartime Flights, 1943-1945 (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1964), 79.)

Made of aluminum, it featured eight clear plastic windows to reduce claustrophobia. The device could retain the air pressure of 5000 feet, thought to be safe for Churchill. But when the assembled pod turned out to be too large to fit into “Ascalon’s” fuselage without dismantling the airplane, it was rejected out of hand.

A year later, as the finishing touches were being put into Churchill’s larger VIP transport, an American C-54 (military version of the DC-4 airliner), the pod reappeared—briefly. While it would—just—fit into the larger (but still unpressurized) airplane, it was rejected as too heavy to be practical. (According to “Anglo-American Skymaster” in Flight, 29 November 1945, 581-84.)

Churchill never used the pod designed for him, though many postwar references, lately on the Internet, suggest that he did. Nor do we know what happened to it. Had he actually used it, it almost certainly would have been preserved, but in all likelihood it was quickly scrapped.

—CHRISTOPHER H. STERLING
Riddles
Mysteries
Enigmas

Q The House of Commons is designed so that opposing MPs are far enough away from each other to prevent swordplay. Exactly how far is that?
A Good question! The two sides are separated by 13 feet, said to be two swords'-lengths apart.
—Paul H. Courtenay

Q In which hotel did Churchill stay when he was in Munich, where he almost met Hitler, in 1932?
A The official biography and its document volumes do not state the hotel, but Churchill says it was the Regina, while Ernst “Putzi” Hanfstaengl, the intermediary with Hitler, says it was the Continental, Churchill (The Gathering Storm, London: Cassell, 1948, 65) wrote: “After passing a day on the field of Blenheim, I drove into Munich, and spent the best part of a week there. At the Regina Hotel a gentleman introduced himself to some of my party. He was Herr Hanfstaengl, and spoke a great deal about ‘the Fuehrer,’ with whom he appeared to be intimate.” Hanfstaengl, in Hitler: The Missing Years (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1957), 184 wrote: “I landed with Hitler at Munich airport to find a telephone message awaiting me from Randolph. His family were staying with a party at the

While Churchill sometimes left a hotel to dine at a favorite restaurant, we don’t believe he habitually dined at other hotels. So, if asked to choose, we could choose the Continental as the actual venue, since Hanfstaengl specifically corrected Churchill’s version, and (since it registered more importance with him than with WSC) he would have remembered the event more clearly.

This would not be the only minor error of time or place in The Gathering Storm. For example, the book also gets the time and number of people wrong for the meeting that made Churchill Prime Minister in 1940.

The Harvard-educated Hanfstaengl is generally thought to be reliable. As Hitler’s foreign press secretary, he tried to exert a moderating influence, but fell out of favor in 1936—he claims Goebbels et. al. planned to assassinate him—and got out of Germany in 1937. In the USA in 1942, he advised Roosevelt on Hitler and the Nazis, and later wrote his book, originally entitled Unheard Witness.

Q Did Churchill ever make a comment about Picasso?
A Picasso reliably said of Churchill (there are many references): “If that man were a painter by profession he’d have no trouble in earning a good living.” But this drew no reply from Churchill and we can find nothing by him at all about Picasso—except one “red herring” in John Pearson’s lamentable Citadel of the Heart: Winston and the Churchill Dynasty (London: Macmillan, 1991), 385:

“Alfred,” [Churchill] once remarked to his friend Sir Alfred Munnings, the President of the Royal Academy, as they strolled down Piccadilly, ‘if I saw Picasso walking down the street ahead of us, do you know what I would do? I’d kick him up the arse.’

As so often in that book, the author was repeating an unsubstantiated story, vide Mary Soames in Churchill: His Life as Painter (London: Collins, 1990), 157:

“At the [Royal] Academy Dinner in 1949, in his Presidential speech, [Munnings] implicated Churchill in an abusive attack he chose to make on ‘modern art’ in general, and various celebrated modern artists in particular. Winston was much displeased, as this extract from a letter to Sir Alfred shows:

‘...heard with surprise your statement that we were walking up the street together when I spoke to you about kicking Picasso if we met him. I do not think we have ever walked up a street together, and anyhow this is not the sort of statement that should be attributed to me. I know you speak on the impulse of the moment, but I protest nonetheless against these utterances.’

‘Winston minded very much that such statements should be attributed to him—they would have been quite out of character, for he was both modest about his own work and respectful of that of others, whether famous or obscure, and whether he admired it or not.”
9/11/12

In the aftermath of Middle East atrocities on the 11th anniversary of "9/11," the killing of an ambassador and two others and the raising of the al Qaeda black flag over four embassies, we were repeatedly asked for the same two Churchill quotations by politicians and members of the media.

"When the situation was manageable it was neglected, and now that it is thoroughly out of hand we apply too late the remedies which then might have effected a cure. There is nothing new in the story. It is as old as the Sibylline books. It falls into that long, dismal catalogue of the fruitlessness of experience and the confirmed unteachableness of mankind. Want of foresight, unwillingness to act when action would be simple and effective, lack of clear thinking, confusion of counsel until the emergency comes, until self-preservation strikes its jarring gong—these are the features which constitute the endless repetition of history."
—House of Commons, 2 May 1935.

In a conference at Stresa, Britain, France and Italy had agreed to cooperate to maintain the independence of Austria. His fear was that this plan would be nullified by inertia. Hitler annexed Austria in March 1938. If only, Churchill was saying, these three powers had worked for peace and collective security earlier.

Perhaps even more appropriate for the moment was the second request:

"The Middle East is one of the hardest-hearted areas in the world. It has always been fought over, and peace has only reigned when a major power has established firm influence and shown that it would maintain its will. Your friends must be supported with every vigour and if necessary they must be avenged. Force, or perhaps force and bribery, are the only things that will be respected. It is very sad, but we had all better recognise it. At present our friendship is not valued, and our enmity is not feared."


History doesn’t repeat, Mark Twain said, but it sometimes rhymes….

JAMAICAN ECHO

Jamaica is celebrating the 50th anniversary of independence this year, and the story is circulating that Churchill once quoted “If We Must Die,” the famous verse of Jamaican poet Claude McKay. Finest Hour has been able to advise that Churchill did not repeat McKay’s poem, though in our opinion he shared the sentiments:

If we must die, let it not be like hogs
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
Making their mock at our accursed lot.
If we must die, O let us nobly die,
So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!
O kinsmen! we must meet the common foe!
Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one death blow!
What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we’ll face the murderous cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

The Jamaica Observer, which had first asserted the connection, kindly published our correction on September 25th (http://xrl.us/bmrc2z), excerpted from David Freeman’s article in FH 125:33:

Winston Churchill and Claude McKay (JAMAICA OBSERVER)

“Claude McKay first published his sonnet If We Must Die in the July 1919 issue of The Liberator. McKay was inspired to pen the verse in reaction to the race riots that took place in the United States during the 1919 ‘red scare.’ McKay had been born in Jamaica but emigrated to the US in 1912 and become active in radical politics. After World War II it was alleged that Churchill had quoted all or part of McKay’s poem to Parliament and/or the U.S.: a famous white leader citing a black poet. But there is no evidence in Hansard or the Congressional Record.

“The confusion stems perhaps from the fact that the poem sounds like something Churchill might have said. Perhaps the more egregious appropriation of McKay was carried out by those who seek to restrict the poet to a black studies paradigm that distorts the emphatically international contours of a remarkable career.” ⬇
“It is as if the world has not moved” 
Great Contemporaries: Seventy-five Years On

The first appearance of Great Contemporaries included twenty-one studies, while the 1938 “revised extended edition” offers a further four which comprise valuable entries on Fisher, Baden-Powell, Parnell and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. [The ISI edition adds five very significant sketches from Churchill’s canon: H.G. Wells, Charlie Chaplin, Kitchener, Kipling and King Edward VIII. —Ed.]

Each study first appeared as an article. As detailed in the ISI edition, Churchill altered and sometimes softened his original judgments, and made emendations based on new information. Unhappily, the article on Lloyd George (from the series “Great Men of Our Time”) is omitted, but this one and others excluded can be read in the four-volume Collected Essays of Sir Winston Churchill (London: Library of Imperial History, 1975).

The central theme of Churchill’s collection is the group of British statesmen who dominated politics at the turn of the 20th century: Balfour, Chamberlain, Rosebery, Morley, Asquith, Curzon. These urbane, erudite, cultured and civilised public men dominated Imperial affairs with a brilliance which contrasts with the drabness of today’s political barbarians. On the whole the book is a valuable study of the course of history in the first four decades of the 20th century, although one is mystified by the omission of Carson and his influence on the Irish problem. The biographies, mostly about men whom Churchill knew intimately, are of unique value.

Churchill’s wit is never better illustrated than in his essay on the only man of letters included, George Bernard Shaw, whom he treats not as a dramatist but as a strange political creature, “the unique double-headed chameleon, the acquisitive capitalist yet sincere communist…the world’s most famous clown and Pantaloon in one.” But there runs through this, and indeed all the pieces, an overriding cordiality and liking for the subject, for Churchill was not a hater. Only once, over Hitler, would he be totally unforgiving. While recognizing mankind’s frailties and foolishness, he retained compassion and hope, and was never cynical. His judgments are of justice tempered with magnanimity.

In Bargaining for Supremacy (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1977), James R. Leutez accused Churchill of being “oddly unaware of other people’s reactions…not much interested in others.” This is a frequent charge, but as these essays testify, Churchill had a greater awareness of human nature and regard for human beings than most. The imaginative man does not need to experience poverty in order to understand it.

H. Ashley Redburn

Finest Hour 46, Winter 1984-85
Churchill’s awareness of others is perhaps best demonstrated in his chapter on Philip Snowden, who had truly been reared in poverty, and with whom Churchill spent seven years wrangling during their successive terms as Chancellors of the Exchequer. After recounting their fierce conflicts WSC adds, “never have I had any feelings towards him which destroyed the impression that he was a generous, true-hearted man…. the British Democracy should be proud of Philip Snowden.” Snowden’s widow wrote Churchill when this essay first appeared to thank him for this salute to a political opponent.

The first several pages of “Georges Clemenceau” are strangely dull, probably because they were culled from George Adams’ biography of “The Tiger.” But when Churchill turns to his personal contact the text takes on a familiar glow. Here is the model for Churchill himself: “Clemenceau was quite right, the only thing to do was to beat the Germans.” We see other glimpses of the future: Clemenceau “uttered to me in his room at the Ministry of War, ‘I will fight in front of Paris, I will fight behind Paris,’” which presaged, “We shall fight on the beaches...on the landing grounds...in the streets” in 1940. And did not Clemenceau’s wish to be buried by his father’s side, in the country place whence his ancestors came, inspire Churchill to choose his simple grave beside Lord Randolph in Bladon?

Writing in “Roosevelt from Afar,” Churchill accurately says that FDR “will rank among the greatest.” But he questions whether Roosevelt’s program can restore prosperity to the United States. He warns against imposing on American industry and commerce a dominant trade unionism in the British mould.

Events were not so easy to forecast then. Indeed the debate on Roosevelt continues today, and not least on Churchill’s poser: “Is it better to have equality at the price of poverty or well-being at the price of inequality?”

Churchill’s views on unemployment, productivity, financial and economic policy on the life and well-being of every country are as appropriate eighty years on as they were in the 1930s. It is as if the world has not moved. His views on trade unionism may cause younger readers, reared on the myth that he hated and wished to destroy unions, to reflect on, if not modify, their force-fed opinions.

This book is about mankind and about a few prominent men—great, evil, stupid, silly, wise. Occasionally the dark stream of melancholy Churchill can powerfully express is revealed, as when by the bedside of the dying Balfour he reflects on “the tragedy which robs the world of all the wisdom and treasure gathered in a great man’s life and experience, and hands the lamp to some impetuous and untutored stripling, or lets it fall shivered into fragments on the ground.” Of course this also applies to ordinary mortals—people unknown, who will inherit no famous grave—though Churchill does not say so.

Great Contemporaries is also about Churchill as he sees himself, with the personalities which shaped his judgments and character. He outlines the debts he owes, the knowledge gained, from observing their qualities and defects. At this distance we see him absorbing those lessons of leadership for the moment when he was to become the head of government in a nation alone, at its most solemn hour. ☞

The late Henry Ashley Redburn OBE, of Rutland and Hampshire, England, compiled the first bibliography of works about Sir Winston Churchill. He was a constant contributor, adviser and friend to Finest Hour and its editors, Dalton Newfield and Richard Langworth, from 1970 until his death in the mid-1980s, always providing superbly written prose with precisely the word count needed. Great Contemporaries (Cohen A105) was originally published in 1937 by Thornton Butterworth, London, and Putnams, New York. The new edition was published by ISI Books in 2012: softbound, illustrated, 506 pages, $22, member price $17.60.
I am very pleased that the editor of Finest Hour is able to reprint the Rosebery essay from the new edition of Churchill’s Great Contemporaries that I edited for the new ISI Books edition. Great Contemporaries was one of three books of essays, all published earlier in magazines or newspapers, that Churchill proposed to his publisher Thornton Butterworth early in his “wilderness years,” his most fruitful decade as a writer.

Thoughts and Adventures, published in 1932, included essays on spies, cartoons, flying, and the future. Great Contemporaries, published in 1937, offered brief lives of twenty-one “great men of our age”; an expanded edition with four additional essays followed in 1938. A proposed third volume of essays on American subjects was not published in Churchill’s lifetime but, posthumously edited by his homonymous grandson, appeared in 1999 as The Great Republic.

In his preface, Churchill explains that “the central theme” of Great Contemporaries is of course the group of British statesmen who shone at the end of the last century [the 19th] and the beginning of this [the 20th]—Balfour, Chamberlain, Rosebery, Morley, Asquith and Curzon. All lived, worked and disputed for so many years together, knew each other well, and esteemed each other highly. It was my privilege as a far younger man to be admitted to their society and their kindness….Those to whom these great men are but names—that is to say the vast majority of my readers—may perhaps be glad to gain from these notes some acquaintance with them. (9–10)

Churchill begins the book with Lord Rosebery, who he tells us “was probably my father’s greatest friend.” Lord Randolph’s son “inherited this friendship, or rather the possibility of renewing it in another generation” (14). Churchill enjoyed talking to Rosebery about many things, especially about his father. His work on the official biography of Lord Randolph drew them often together, and in the first decade of the 20th century both were out of sympathy with their parties and vainly seeking “middle courses,” which made them closer (15). Their friendship lasted long after Rosebery’s political career was over: Churchill tells us in the preface to his life of Marlborough how the aged statesman encouraged him to write that book by teaching him that Macaulay’s slanders against his ancestor had been refuted.

One theme of Great Contemporaries is friendship: friendship that transcends political differences, which Churchill observed in his father and the parliamentarians of his generation; and friendship that transcends generations, which often takes the form of of the old offering encouragement to the young.

Professor Muller is chairman of the Department of Political Science at the University of Alaska, Anchorage, and of The Churchill Centre Board of Academic Advisers. He is the editor of several new and upcoming Churchill titles, including the classic two-volume 1899 work, The River War.
“At first,” Churchill recalls, Rosebery “did not seem to approve of me,” but after the Boer War and his election to Parliament the statesman showed him “marked kindness” (14). Churchill was taken with Rosebery’s “air of ancient majesty,” for “often, when listening, one felt in living contact with the centuries which are gone, and perceived the long continuity of our island tale” (17). By the 1930s, Churchill’s own conversation offered this acquaintance with Britain’s history to younger friends, and in writings like Great Contemporaries he performed the same office for his readers.

Churchill begins his essay on Rosebery with this arresting sentence: “It might be said that Lord Rosebery outlived his future by ten years and his past by more than twenty” (13). We soon discover what Churchill means by this enigmatic remark: Rosebery’s future appeared bright when he became prime minister in 1894, but that promise was dashed when his government fell in 1895. Still, he remained in political life for another ten years, until he declared himself against Irish home rule in 1905, and then “his political career was closed for ever.”

The Earl of Rosebery lived on as a has-been for more than twenty years, dying in 1929 (13). In short, the political career of this remarkable man was a failure, and Churchill means to discover why: he avers that Rosebery’s “actions, and still more the character and personality which lay behind them, are worthy of most careful study, not only for the sake of their high merit, but at least as much for their limitations” (14).

The trouble with Rosebery in a democratic age was that he was not a democratic politician: “he was essentially a survival from a vanished age, when great Lords ruled with general acceptance and strove, however fiercely, only with others like themselves” (18). Rosebery was the last prime minister who never served in the House of Commons, which meant that he never fought an election. Churchill remarks:

Whatever one may think about democratic government, it is just as well to have practical experience of its rough and slatternly foundations. No part of the education of a politician is more indispensable than the fighting of elections. Here you come in contact with all sorts of persons and every current of national life. You feel the Constitution at work in its primary processes. Dignity may suffer, the superfine gloss is soon worn away; nice particularisms and special private policies are scraped off; much has to be accepted with a shrug, a sigh or a smile; but at any rate in the end one knows a good deal about what happens and why.

Rosebery was cut off from all this by being an earl. Churchill describes him as moody and ill at ease in a crowd, unable to win the hearts of ordinary voters, “to express their passion and win their confidence” (18). Our author concludes that in modern times one must go through “laborious, vexatious and at times humiliating processes” to achieve “great ends,” but Rosebery would not do it (19).

The new ISI Books edition of Great Contemporaries follows the text of the second edition published in 1938. Seventy-five years after the book first appeared, it seemed good to add new footnotes identifying people, places, events, and references in the essay.

Two wonderful collaborators helped me prepare the new edition. Paul H. Courtenay drafted the lion’s share of these notes, and I edited them. Nearly 1200 footnotes were added to the book, and Mr. Courtenay drafted ninety-five percent of them; of 110 footnotes in the essay on Rosebery, he drafted 101. Notes at the end of the new edition (not reproduced here) explain differences between earlier published versions of each essay and the final version in Great Contemporaries. Erica L. Chenoweth and I prepared these notes in collaboration; notes on the Rosebery essay are on pages 425–27.

“The Earl of Rosebery,” which Churchill told Thornton Butterworth he considered “the best study in the book” (Churchill Archives Centre, CHAR 8/558/72), was first published as “Lord Rosebery” in Nash’s Pall Mall 84 no. 437, October 1929: 10–13 (Cohen C326), with four sub-heads: “The story of the One Man who foresaw the War and dared to proclaim his prophecy,” “His was the voice crying in the wilderness—if his colleagues had listened—What then?” “Everyone is fed up with War, the idea is odious to men of every nation, class and temperament,” and “In Rosebery’s time all the issues were invested with a false glamour and shrouded in opaque ignorance.”

This new ISI Books edition of Great Contemporaries is part of a larger project which the then-International Churchill Society set out to do in 1989: returning Churchill’s out-of-print books to print. Early accomplishments—the Boer War volumes, Savrola, My African Journey, My Early Life, Thoughts and Adventures and Great Contemporaries itself—were unsatisfying in the choice of texts. Efforts in the 1990s, including the editor’s edition of India (1990) and the Easton Press editions of The World Crisis, A History of the English-Speaking Peoples and The War Speeches, contained Churchill’s final approved texts and new introductions.

In 2002 came the two-volume University of Chicago reprint of Marlborough: His Life and Times, followed by the ISI Books edition of Thoughts and Adventures (2009), which I edited with assistance from Paul H. Courtenay and Alana L. Barton. My edition of The River War, with a new foreword by Lady Soames, will be published in two volumes by St. Augustine’s Press, along with Patrick Powers’ edition of Savrola. Paul, Erica, and I have also begun work on an annotated edition of My Early Life. In these endeavors I am grateful for help, advice, and support, particularly from my fellow academic advisers and the editor of Finest Hour.
It might be said that Lord Rosebery\(^1\) outlived his future by ten years and his past by more than twenty.

The brilliant prospects which had shone before him until he became Prime Minister in 1894 were dispersed by the break-up of his Government and the decisive defeat of the Liberal Party in 1895. The part he took as an Imperialist\(^2\) and a patriot in supporting, four years later, the South African War\(^3\) destroyed his hold upon the regard and confidence of a large section of the Radical masses.\(^4\) His resignation of the Leadership of the Liberal Party had already released them from their allegiance. By his definite declaration against Home Rule\(^5\) when Mr. Balfour’s fall in 1905\(^6\) was approaching, he cut himself off deliberately and resolutely from all share in the impending Liberal triumph and long reign of power. He severed himself by purposeful action from his friends and followers. ‘Content to let occasion die,’\(^7\) he withdrew from all competition for leadership in the political arena; he erected barriers against his return which he meant to be insurmountable; he isolated himself in cool and unaffectionately disdainful detachment. It was known only too well that overtures would be useless. By 1905 his political career was closed for ever. It was only in 1929 that his long life ended.

Dwelling in his wide and beautiful estates, moving frequently from one delightful house and one capacious library to another, he lived to sustain the burden of an eightieth birthday, lighted by the refinements of profound and astonishingly wide-ranging literary knowledge, amused by the Turf,\(^8\) and cheered and companioned by his children and his grandchildren. The afflictions of old age fell successively with gathering weight upon him in his ever-deepening retirement; and when he died his name and actions had faded entirely from the public mind, and were only revived and presented to the eyes of a new generation by the obituary notices. But those actions, and still more...
the character and personality which lay behind them, are
worthy of most careful study, not only for the sake of their
high merit, but at least as much for their limitations.

Lord Rosebery was probably my father’s greatest friend.
They were contemporaries at Eton and at Oxford.9
Although apparently divided by party, they moved in the
same society, had many friends in common, and pursued
the same pleasures and sports—of which racing was ever the
sovereign. Their correspondence was sparkling and contin-
uous, and their intimate personal relations were never
affected by the fierce political struggles of the eighties,10
or by any vicissitudes of fortune.

I inherited this friendship, or rather the possibility of
renewing it in another generation. I was anxious to cultivate
it for many reasons, of which the first was to learn more
about my father from his contemporary, his equal and his
companion. With some at least of those feelings of awe and
attraction which led Boswell11 to Dr. Johnson,12 I sought
occasions to develop the acquaintance of childhood into a
grown-up friendship. At first he did not seem to approve of
me: but after the South African War, when I had at least
become well known and was a young M.P., he began to
show me marked kindness. The biography of my father13
by which I was soon absorbed opened a wide and fertile field
of common interest. He assisted actively in the enterprise,
drew richly upon his fund of choice reminiscence, collected
letters and documents, read proofs, criticized sympatheti-
cally but penetratingly both the subject and the work. This
formed a theme of common interest between us and built a
bridge across the gulf of a different generation.

During the years of my literary task, from 1900 to 1905,
I was often his guest in all his houses, at Mentmore,14 in
Berkeley Square,15 at the Durdans hard by Epsom Downs,16
on the Firth of Forth at Dalmeny,17 at his shooting lodge,
Rosebery;18 and we also met year after year on long visits to
common friends in the delicious autumn of the Scottish >>

1. Archibald Philip Primrose (1847–1929), Fifth Earl of Rosebery,
1868; Liberal prime minister, 1894–95.
2. One who believed that the permanence and potential expansion of
the British Empire under enlightened, benevolent British rule were in the
interests of the United Kingdom and each of its worldwide territories.
3. The Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902) was a struggle by Dutch farmers
in South Africa to avoid domination by later British settlers and entrepre-
neurs and, by extension, the British government. After early reverses and
heavy casualties, the British eventually prevailed, leading to the creation of
the Union of South Africa within the British Empire in 1910.
4. Radicals emerged from the ranks of the new industrial and
Nonconformist classes and, by the early 19th century, were marching to the
left of, but in step with, the Liberal Party. By mid-century a unified Liberal
Party had become dominant in left-wing politics, though some of its
members remained attached to the older designation of Radicals. By the
end of the century the Liberal Party had split, many of the party’s imperial-
ists becoming Unionists allied to the Conservatives. The Liberal Party began
its steep parliamentary decline with the general election in 1910, its Radical
credentials being superseded a decade later by those of the Labour Party.
5. William Gladstone (1809–1898) served four times as Liberal
and 1893, he advanced bills providing for Irish home rule. Each bill was
defeated in Parliament, and each defeat led him to resign the premiership.
Rosebery, unenthusiastic about home rule for Ireland, nonetheless sup-
ported Gladstone on the second bill. When the House of Lords rejected
that bill and Gladstone again resigned, Rosebery succeeded him as prime
minister. The Irish question remained a contentious issue in British poli-
tics, and Rosebery finally declared his opposition to home rule in 1901,
forsaking his leadership of the Liberal Party.
6. Balfour resigned the premiership in December 1905, after splits in
his Conservative Party over educational policy and tariff reform, and in the
wake of a string of by-election defeats. The subsequent general elec-
tion in January 1906 resulted in a landslide victory for the Liberals. As a
result of this victory, Churchill, who had crossed the floor to join the
Liberal Party only eighteen months earlier, received his first ministerial
appointment, as undersecretary of state for the colonies.
8. A sobriquet for horse racing, derived from London’s exclusive Turf
Club, founded in 1868. Rosebery was a leading rachorse owner whose
horses twice won the Derby during his premiership: Ladas II (referred to
later in the essay simply as “Ladas”) in 1894 and Sir Visto in 1895. His
horse Cicero also won the Derby in 1905.
9. The pinnacle of English education: Eton College, an independent
boarding school for boys aged thirteen to eighteen, was founded by King
Henry VI in 1440, while Oxford University originated in the 12th
century. The future Earl of Rosebery entered Eton in 1860, and Winston
Churchill’s father, Lord Randolph Churchill, in 1863; both left the
school in 1865. Rosebery, known until 1868 by the courtesy title of Lord
Dalmeny, attended Oxford’s Christ Church, 1866–68; Lord Randolph
was nearby at Oxford’s Merton College, 1867–70.
10. These included policy differences on Irish home rule, extension of
the franchise, and imperial problems in South Africa, Egypt, and Sudan.
11. James Boswell (1740–95), Scottish lawyer and writer best known for
The Life of Samuel Johnson (1791), in which he chronicled the best
of Johnson’s conversation.
12. Samuel Johnson (1709–84), author. In 1755, after nine years’
single-handed labor, Johnson published his Dictionary of the English
Language, which despite its idiosyncrasies was regarded as preeminent
until The Oxford English Dictionary was published 173 years later.
Macmillan, 1906). Writing his father’s biography was for Winston, in his
first luster as a parliamentarian, alike a labor of love and a political educa-
tion to prepare him for ministerial responsibilities of his own.
14. Mentmore Towers, Bucks., is a large neo-Renaissance country
house, built in 1852–54 for Baron Mayer Amschel de Rothschild (1818–
1874). In 1878, Rosebery married Rothschild’s only child and heir,
Hannah (1851–1890), the richest woman in Britain. Rosebery inherited
Mentmore Towers when she died before she was forty.
15. Rosebery bought 38 Berkeley Square, in the heart of Mayfair, as
his London house.
16. The racecourse at Epsom Downs, twelve miles south of London,
is the venue for the Derby, England’s premier horse race, run each June.
Rosebery bought The Durdans in 1874 to use when attending race meet-
ings; in later years he could receive the king and queen at this house. He
died here in 1929. His three Derby winners are buried in the grounds.
17. Dalmeny House, a large Gothic revival mansion in Scotland, was
completed in 1817 for Rosebery’s grandfather Archibald Philip Primrose
(1783–1868), 4th Earl of Rosebery, 1814, on land owned by the family
since 1662. The property is situated on the south bank of the river Forth,
six miles west of the center of Edinburgh.
18. Rosebery is a small rural community eleven miles south of the
center of Edinburgh.
Above: Dalmeny House, on the Firth of Forth, just off the A90 between Edinburgh and the Forth Road Bridge, is the home of the present 7th Earl and Countess of Rosebery. The first house in Scotland to be built in the Tudor Revival style, it was designed by William Wilkins and completed in 1817. It is open to the public in the summer for guided tours, and some rooms are available to hire for private events. Right: "Perhaps the best place to appreciate Rosebery is Barnbougle Castle, a much-altered tower house on the Dalmeny grounds. It dates to the 13th century but was rebuilt by Churchill's friend in 1881 and has a tiny isolated bedroom at the top where Rosebery would find solitude to think and reflect on the realities of life away from the illusions of politics." —www.infobritain.co.uk. Photo by Jonathan Oldenbuck.

Highlands. Politics provided additional links and ties; for we were both adrift from our parties. He was out of sympathy with the Liberals: I was soon quarrelling with the Tories. We could both toy with the dream of some new system and grouping of men and ideas, in which one could be an Imperialist without swallowing Protection,19 and a social reformer without Little Englandism20 or class bitterness. We had certainly that solid basis of agreement and harmony of outlook upon middle courses, which is shared by many sensible people and was in those days abhorrent to party machines. Need one add that the party machines always prove the stronger?

Over the biography one awkwardness arose. Lord Rosebery’s interest was so strong and his desire to help delineate his friend so keen, that he took the trouble to write a considerable appreciation of Lord Randolph,21 which he suggested I should incorporate textually in my account. I was deeply touched, and at the same time embarrassed: for after all I had my own way of doing things, and the literary integrity of a work is capital. Moreover, his picture of Randolph Churchill’s school days contained the word ‘scug,’22 an Eton slang term which I considered derogatory and unsuited to a biography written by a son. I therefore deferentially but obstinately resisted this expression. He stuck to it and explained its harmless Etonian significance. In the end he wrote that I had rejected his contribution and that it was withdrawn.23 A few years later it appeared as the widely-read and deeply interesting monograph on Lord Randolph and my book about him, in which Lord Rosebery drew with admiration and affection the ‘brilliant being’ who had so compulsively cheered, charmed, directed, and startled his youth and prime.24 The incident, though it distressed me at the time, did not seem in any way to rankle in my illustrious amiss. On the contrary, I think he liked me the better for my filial prudence.

It is difficult to convey the pleasure I derived from his
conversation as it ranged easily and spontaneously upon all kinds of topics ‘from grave to gay, from lively to severe.’ Its peculiar quality was the unexpected depths or suggestive turns which revealed the size of the subject and his own background of knowledge and reflection. At the same time he was full of fun. He made many things not only arresting, but merry. He seemed as much a master of truffles and gossip as of weighty matters. He was keenly curious about every aspect of life. Sportsman, epicure, bookworm, literary critic, magpie collector of historical relics, appreciative owner of veritable museums of art treasures, he never needed to tear a theme to tatters. In lighter vein he flitted jauntily from flower to flower like a glittering insect, by no means unprovided with a sting. And then in contrast, out would come his wise, matured judgments upon the great men and events of the past. But these treats were not always given. He was at his best with two or three and on his day; and sometimes in larger company he seemed shy and ill at ease. When he was out of humour, he could cast a chill over all, and did not hesitate to freeze and snub. On these occasions his face became expressionless, almost a slab, and his eyes lost their light and fire. One saw an altogether different person. But after a bit one knew the real man was there all the time, hiding perversely behind a curtain. And all the more agreeable was it when he came out.

Hardest of all is it to revive the impression which he produced upon his hearers when dealing with the greatest affairs. His life was set in an atmosphere of tradition. The Past stood ever at his elbow and was the counsellor upon whom he most relied. He seemed to be attended by Learning and History, and to carry into current events an air of ancient majesty. His voice was melodious and deep, and often, when listening, one felt in living contact with the centuries which are gone, and perceived the long continuity of our island tale.

Lord Rosebery was the first Prime Minister for many years who had never served in the House of Commons. He will very likely be the last. Whatever one may think about democratic government, it is just as well to have practical experience of its rough and slatternly foundations. No part of the education of a politician is more indispensable than the fighting of elections. Here you come in contact with all sorts of persons and every current of national life. You feel the Constitution at work in its primary processes. Dignity may suffer, the superfine gloss is soon worn away; nice particularisms and special private policies are scraped off; much has to be accepted with a shrug, a sigh or a smile; but at any rate in the end one knows a good deal about what happens and why.

Rosebery had none of this. He addressed and captivated great meetings; he gained the plaudits of tumultuous crowds; he followed Mr. Gladstone through all the immense popular enthusiasms of the Midlothian campaign. But these were the show occasions, where ardent supporters were marshalled in overwhelming strength. They were very different from the bustling experience of a Parliamentary candidature, with its disorderly gatherings, its organized oppositions, its hostile little meetings, its jeering throng, its stream of disagreeable and often silly questions.

19. Protection denoted financial barriers to international trade to protect home industries and to boost trade with the empire; it was a policy robustly pursued by the Conservative Joseph Chamberlain, a dedicated imperialist. Liberals, on the other hand, were in favor of free trade, a principal reason why Churchill deserted the Conservatives to join the Liberals in 1904.

20. A term applied to the attitude of those inimical to the British Empire or to foreign entanglements in general, sympathetic only to the world with which they are personally familiar.

21. Lord Randolph Henry Spencer-Churchill (1849–95), father of Winston Churchill; he held the courtesy title of Lord Randolph as the second surviving son of the 7th Duke of Marlborough. A leading Conservative member of Parliament who served as secretary of state for India and chancellor of the exchequer, he saw his political career come to an abrupt end in 1886 when he unwisely offered his resignation as chancellor on a question relating to military expenditure. He fully expected the cabinet to capitulate, but the prime minister accepted his resignation. He never regained office.

22. The Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed., describes a “scug” as an Eton or Harrow slang term for “a boy who is not distinguished in person, in games, or social qualities…a boy of untidy, dirty, or ill-mannered habits; one whose sense of propriety is not fully developed.”

23. Rosebery to Churchill, 10 September 1905 (CHAR 8/20/33).


27. Parliament consists of two Houses, the upper and lower: the House of Lords, formerly almost entirely hereditary but now largely appointed; and the House of Commons, consisting of some 650 elected members of Parliament (MPs). The last prime minister before Rosebery who had never served in the House of Commons was George Hamilton-Gordon (1784–1860), 4th Earl of Aberdeen, 1801, whose premiership lasted from 1852 until 1855.

28. Churchill is correct: every prime minister since Rosebery has served in the House of Commons. Sir Alexander Frederick Douglas-Home (1903–95), 14th Earl of Home, 1951, the last member of the House of Lords to be appointed prime minister (in 1963), had been a Member of Parliament before inheriting his seat in the House of Lords. Under the terms of the new Peerage Act (1963), he disclaimed his hereditary peerage for life and was elected to the House of Commons as Sir Alec Douglas-Home.

29. In 1879, Gladstone, the former prime minister, was adopted as candidate for Midlothian, the constituency adjacent to Edinburgh. He addressed immense crowds, totaling some 87,000, including 20,000 at a single meeting in Edinburgh; his orations sometimes lasted five hours. The Liberals won the 1880 election and Gladstone began his second premiership. During the campaign, Rosebery, who had made many of the speaking arrangements, was Gladstone’s host at Dalmeny House.
GREAT CONTEMPORARIES

Rosebery’s Eton tutor in something of a spirit of prophecy said of him that he ‘sought the palm without the dust.’ This was not true in the sense in which the phrase is often used—that of avoiding hard work. Rosebery was capable of very hard work and of long hours of daily concentration both on politics and literature. He sought indeed the palm, but the dust had never come his way; and when in high station the compromises, the accommodations, the inevitable acquiescence in inferior solutions, were forced upon him, he was not toughened against these petty vexations, or trained to see them in their true light. Although equipped with capacious knowledge of the part of a modern Statesman, he was essentially a survival from a vanished age, when great Lords ruled with general acceptance and strove, however fiercely, only with others like themselves. While he stood under the aegis of Mr. Gladstone, the Radical masses presented themselves as devoted, loyal, enthusiastic adherents. It was not until the Gladstonian spell had passed away that he realized how very imperfect was his contact with them. He did not think as they thought, or feel as they felt, or understand the means of winning their unselfish and unbounded allegiance. He understood the hard conditions of their lives, and was intellectually indignant at their wrongs and sufferings. His mind ranged back across centuries of their history, and selected with shrewd and wise judgment the steps required to sustain their progress and welfare. But actually to handle them, to wrestle with, them, to express their passion and win their confidence, this he could not do.

Professor Goldwin Smith, with whom he was on terms of intimate acquaintance and correspondence, said of him to me in Toronto in 1900, ‘Rosebery feels about Democracy as if he were holding a wolf by the ears.’ This was a harsh judgment, and probably beyond the truth; but it was not opposed to the truth. As the franchise broadened and the elegant, glittering, imposing trappings faded from British Parliamentary and public life, Lord Rosebery was conscious of an ever-widening gap between himself and the Radical electorate. The great principles of which Hampden died in the field and Sidney on the scaffold, the economics and philosophy of Mill, the venerable inspiration of Gladstonian memories, were no longer enough. One had to face the caucus, the wire-puller and the soap-box; one had to stand on platforms built of planks of all descriptions. He did not like it. He could not do it. He would not try. He knew what was wise and fair and true. He would not go through the laborious, vexatious and at times humiliating processes necessary under modern conditions to bring about these great ends. He would not stoop; he did not conquer.

Let us test these general comments by his career. The milestones of Rosebery’s public life stand forth abruptly along the track. He was one of the first Whig nobles who as a young man embraced the Liberal and democratic conceptions of the later nineteenth century. The stir and enthusiasm of Mr. Gladstone’s Midlothian campaign carried him into politics. There he was, on the spot, a gifted, bright figure in Edinburgh and Scotland, thirty-one or thirty-two, with all that rank and fortune could bestow. And here was the Grand Old Man to listen to whose words rich and poor travelled for days and stood in rain and mist for hours, fighting in Rosebery’s own Scottish domain for what seemed to be a world cause. Rosebery plunged into politics as ‘a chivalrous adventurer.’ When I found myself in this evil-smelling bog, I was always trying to extricate myself. That is the secret of what people used to call my lost opportunities and so forth.

These rather bitter words written in the years of eclipse did not in any way represent the effort, the industry, the resolution, or the robust citizenship which Rosebery contributed for a quarter of a century to British and Imperial affairs. He was an earnest, painstaking man whose heart beat the faster for any cause touching the honour or the greatness of Britain or which concerned the well-being and progress of the mass of the people. He served an apprenticeship of some years in minor offices. He pressed for Scottish legislation more advanced than any for which Mr. Gladstone’s Cabinet of 1880 was prepared. He became at a bound amid general applause Foreign Secretary in Mr. Gladstone’s government of 1886. Here came the second milestone. Home Rule split the Liberal party to the roots. Every man had to choose which way he would go. Rosebery had no sentimental liking for the Irish. But although in his historical writings he repressed his bias, he had latent in him all the Whig scorn for Tories. He stood up to them. He adhered to Mr. Gladstone. He went into the wilderness with him.

The favour or frown of Society contacts in those days played a part in public life incomprehensible to the present generation. But Rosebery stood so high in the land that he could look down upon the cuts and resentments of the London governing class. He was upon occasion as stiff a Radical as John Morley. He had at times a large though indefinite following among Trade Unionists and labouring men. The spectacle of this eloquent, magnificent personage separating himself from the bulk of his class, ‘biding by the Buff and the Blue,’ excited the hostility of the Unionist party, and filled the Liberals in the cool shade with a sense
of hope and expectancy for his future. It clung to him through years of misunderstanding and disappointment. At first they said ‘He will come.’ Then for years ‘If only he would come.’ And finally, long after he had renounced politics for ever, ‘If only he would come back.’

Out of office, by birth debarrled from the experience of electioneering and of House of Commons rough-and-tumble, he found in the London County Council the most lively substitute open to a peer. He was the first and greatest chairman of the London County Council. For nearly three years he guided, impelled and adorned its activities. He raised the status of the municipal life of London to the level of ministerial office. At the centre of twenty-two committees he laid strong, keen hands upon every aspect of London government. When, sorely smitten by the Parnell divorce and other Irish difficulties, Mr. Gladstone and the Liberal party returned to power at the election of 1892 with a majority of only forty, dependent upon the Irish vote, Rosebery was for the second time the widely-acclaimed Foreign Secretary of the new administration. More than ever he was ‘the man of the future.’

He seemed at this time to represent in a Liberal guise the Disraelian idea of Tory Democracy, revived by Lord Randolph Churchill, and also the cruder but far more effective form of Radical-Imperialism embodied in his final phase by Joseph Chamberlain. In the main the differences between all these three men were questions of emphasis and style. Rosebery expressed the spirit of the modern British Empire with a foresight and precision which make him in retrospect the immediate spiritual successor of Disraeli.

30. William Johnson (1823–1892), himself an Old Etonian, changed his surname to Cory (his grandmother’s maiden name) in 1872. A poet who wrote the “Eton Boating Song,” he is best known for his composition “Hercitus,” which he translated from Callimachus’ original Greek.

31. An adaptation from one of the Epistles by Horace (65–8 B.C.): “The happy state of winning the palm without the dust of racing.” In an 1862 note to a fellow Eton master, Johnson wrote of the 15-year-old future Lord Rosebery: “I would give you a piece of plate if you would get this lad to work; he is one of those who like the palm without the dust.” Nevertheless, only two years later, Johnson took his pupil to Rome and described him to a correspondent as “the wisest boy that ever lived.”

32. Goldwin Smith (1823–1910) was educated at Eton College and Oxford University and later became Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford. After teaching at Cornell University, he arrived in Canada in 1871, where he became active in the Canada First movement.

33. Churchill went to Toronto as part of a North American lecture tour between his election to Parliament on 1 October 1900 and taking his seat in the House of Commons on 14 February 1901. In that era, members of Parliament did not receive a salary, and Churchill sought to shore up his financial situation.

34. From a 22 April 1820 letter from Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) to John Holmes (1773–1843), referring to slavery: “We have the wolf by the ears; and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other.”

35. These words are spoken by Lord Vere in a political novel by Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby, or the New Generation, 3 vols. (London: Nelson, 1844), 2:229. John Hampden (1594–1643), an opponent of King Charles I (reigned 1625–49), was one of five impeached members of Parliament, and his attempted arrest in 1642 marked a turning point in the events leading to the English Civil War (1642–51). He was mortally wounded at the Battle of Chalgrove Field (1643), a minor Royalist victory. Algernon Sidney (1623–1683) was a convinced republican during the English Civil War. Years later, after the restoration of King Charles II (reigned 1660–85), he opposed the monarchy again. Found guilty of treason, he was executed in 1683.

36. John Stuart Mill (1806–1873), liberal philosopher who wrote On Liberty (1859) and was a champion of freedom for the individual.

37. A reference to a comedy by Oliver Goldsmith (1730–1774), She Stoops to Conquer, written in 1771 and first performed in 1773. Finding the man her father wishes her to marry more confident in the company of women of a lower class, the heroine “stoops to conquer,” posing as a maid to put him at ease.

38. Gladstone was affectionately known to his supporters as the Grand Old Man (or G.O.M.).

39. Rosebery used this phase to describe the Midlothian campaign, where, for the first time, he became genuinely excited by politics.


41. Morley consistently supported left-wing causes—including universal suffrage, a national education system, and Irish home rule—and opposed British involvement in the First World War.

42. Members of trade unions, developed to protect the interests of working people by collective bargaining on pay and working conditions. By the end of the 19th century, the union movement was powerful enough to play a major part in founding the Labour Party.

43. Buff and blue were the traditional colors of the Whig Party, hailed in a poem by Robert Burns (1759–96), “Here’s a Health to Them That’s Awa” (1792): “It’s guid to support Caledonia’s cause / And hide by the Buff and the Blue.”

44. When the Liberal Party split over home rule for Ireland in 1886, many Liberals who opposed it formed a coalition with the Conservatives, later merging with them to form the Conservative and Unionist Party.

45. The local authority that controlled London (excluding The City) from 1889 until 1965.

46. Beginning on 17 January 1889.

47. Charles Stewart Parnell (1846–1891) was an Irish politician who passionately espoused Irish nationalism, despite his Protestant, landed background. In 1890 his career was shattered when he was cited as correspondent in a divorce case brought by fellow member of Parliament William Henry O’Shea (1840–1905) against his wife, Katharine “Kitty” O’Shea (1846–1921). Parnell married Mrs. O’Shea in 1891.

48. Speaking before a huge audience at an election meeting in Manchester on 25 June 1886, Gladstone singled out for special censure Rosebery, “of whom I will say to the Liberal Party of this country, and I say it not without reflection—for if I said it lightly I should be doing injustice no less to him than to them—in whom I say to the Liberal Party that they see the man of the future.”

49. As Conservative prime minister, 1868 and 1874–80, Benjamin Disraeli (1804–81), First Earl of Beaconsfield, 1876, aimed for an alliance between the aristocracy and the working class against the increasing power of the merchants and new industrialists.

50. Its followers stood for beneficent empire—a high moral imperialism that aimed at securing justice and fair dealing for subject peoples, freedom of trade, prosperity, and peace all round—and the dependence of social reform and prosperity at home on a prosperous empire.
“Whatever one may think about democratic government, it is just as well to have practical experience of its rough and slatternly foundations. No part of the education of a politician is more indispensable than the fighting of elections.... Rosebery had none of this....He isolated himself in cool and unaffectedly disdainful detachment.... He would not stoop; he did not conquer.”

The discords of his culminating period arose from the fact that he became the ministerial successor of Mr. Gladstone. Now that I reflect upon his conversation and re-read his speeches in Lord Crewe’s deeply-informed biography, I realize that he responded spontaneously to the same stimuli which actuated Disraeli. Indeed he often seems to march out of the pages of ‘Coningsby’—the aristocrat-champion of the poor and depressed classes—‘I would make these great slum-landlords skip.’

And at the same time to dream of a glorious and abiding British Empire, freed to the utmost possible degree from European entanglements, was at all times his indulgence, and to achieve it his aim. He carried the story of Empire forward into a chapter only read with comprehension after he had long ceased to be an actor on the political stage. Who can dispute these somewhat unfashionable assertions in the light of his message to Australia delivered at Adelaide on January 18, 1883: ‘...These are no longer colonies in the ordinary sense of the term; but I claim that this is a country which has established itself a nation, and that its nationality is now and will be henceforward recognized by the world....But there is a further question; does this fact of your being a nation imply separation from the Empire? God forbid! There is no need for any nation, however great, leaving the Empire, because the Empire is a Commonwealth of Nations.’ Rosebery lived to see this phrase, which fell from the prescient lips of genius, become fifty years later the accepted statutory law which now to-day alone encircles the most numerous, the most diverse, the most wide-spread, voluntary, but none the less habitual, association of states and nations of which there is record.

The disharmonies and the eventual rupture of his political career sprang from his proud and at times supercilious inability to subject himself to the mechanism of modern democracy and to the exigencies of the party caucus. Had he possessed Mr. Baldwin’s phlegmatic capacity of putting up with a score of unpleasant and even humbling situations, in order to be master of something very big at the end of a blue moon, he would indeed have been not only a Prophet but a Judge in Israel. He was far too sensitive, too highly strung, for these compromises and submissions. He was a child and brilliant survivor of the old vanishing, and now vanished, oligarchic world which across the centuries had built the might and the freedom of Britain. He was often palpably out of touch with his environment; perhaps that is no censure upon him. It must however be emphasized that physically he did not stand the stresses well. In times of crisis and responsibility his active, fertile mind and imagination preyed upon him. He was bereft of sleep. He magnified trifles. He failed to separate the awkward incidents of the hour from the long swing of events, which he so clearly understood. Toughness when nothing particular was happening was not the form of fortitude in which he excelled. He was unduly attracted by the dramatic, and by the pleasure of making a fine gesture. He would not join Mr. Gladstone’s Government in 1880, for
that might seem to be the direct reward of his share in the Midlothian campaign. He volunteered to join after the death of General Gordon at Khartoum, because then it was a case of ‘all hands to the pumps.’ In a wearing ordeal his thoughts strayed to the fine speech he could make on resignation. And then he was of course never given the chance of wielding real power. He never held office with a large, loyal, solid majority behind him. He never had a united party at his back, and could never plan ahead for two or three years at a time.

How these Victorians busied themselves and contended about minor things!

What long, brilliant, impassioned letters they wrote each other about refined personal and political issues of which the modern Juggernaut takes no account! They never had to face, as we have done, and still do, the possibility of national ruin. Their main foundations were never shaken. They dwelt in an age of British splendour and unchallenged leadership. The art of government was exercised within a limited sphere. World revolution, mortal defeat, national subjugation, chaotic degeneration, or even national bankruptcy, had not laid steel claws upon their sedate, serene, complacent life. Rosebery flourished in an age of great men and small events.

The third milestone at the top of his life marked his Prime Ministership—First Minister of the Crown as he would call it. This indeed was a strangely-lighted episode. Early in 1894 Mr. Gladstone, eighty-four years old, resigned his leadership of Her Majesty’s Government and the Liberal party in protest against the Navy estimates and what he called ‘the increasing militarism of the times.’ Two men stood forth to succeed him—Rosebery and Harcourt. Rosebery was in the Lords, Harcourt in the Commons. Sir William Harcourt was a genial, accomplished Parliamentarian, a party man, ambitious in a calculating style, a Falstaffian figure, with an eye fixed earnestly, but by no means unerringly, upon the main chance. The Liberal Government, holding office by the Irish vote, assailed vehemently by the far more solid Unionist array, was struggling along under the freely-used veto of the House of Lords, by majorities which sometimes fell below twenty, towards an ugly election. It was a bleak, precarious, wasting inheritance.

It was at this time that he most felt the need of his wife, who had died some years before. With all her almost excessive adoration of Rosebery, she was ever a pacifying and composing element in his life, which he was never able to find again, because he never could give full confidences.


52. Disraeli’s Coningsby is a love story overshadowed by the conflict between old and new wealth.

53. Rosebery and his wife traveled round the world in 1883–84. He went to Australia with a hopeful view of empire that was immensely strengthened by his experiences there.

54. This is the first known reference to the “Commonwealth” as it came to be understood and dominated.

55. A blue moon occurs when a season has four full moons, rather than the usual three; the term refers to the third of four full moons in the season, which can occur only in February, May, August, or November, a month before a solstice or equinox. In colloquial language, the term means a period that seldom recurs.

56. In the Bible, Samuel is stated to have been a prophet and a judge in Israel: see 1 Samuel 3:20; 7:6; 15–16; 9:9, 19; and Acts 3:24; 13:20.

57. In 1884 the British sent General Charles George Gordon (1833–1885) to relieve Egyptian garrisons in the Sudan that were threatened by the Mahdi, a charismatic and popular Muslim leader. Gordon found himself besieged in Khartoum. After a period of indecision, Prime Minister Gladstone sent a relief expedition: it arrived two days too late, and Gordon and the garrison were slain on 26 January 1885. Gordon’s death was not avenged until nearly fourteen years later, when the British retook Khartoum. Winston Churchill took part in this expedition, riding in the climactic cavalry charge of the Twenty-First Lancers at the Battle of Omdurman on 2 September 1898.

58. A saying derived from the urgent need to bail water from a ship in imminent danger of sinking.

59. Originally an uncouth idol of Krishna, who was dragged at an annual festival on a huge car, under the wheels of which the devotees threw themselves to their deaths; later the word was used metaphorically, as Churchill uses it here, to signify blind devotion or sacrifice to a party or cause.

60. A phrase in general use, which adds a little extra dignity to the more prosaic “prime minister.”

61. Each year the Admiralty had to submit its proposals to Parliament for expenditure over the next twelve months. In 1894 some of Gladstone’s trusted colleagues refused to support him in his lifelong determination to limit expenditure on armaments.

62. In addition to continuing British involvement in colonial conflicts in the Sudan and South Africa, the newly unified Germany under Bismarck was beginning to cause concern because of its jealousy of British supremacy.

63. Sir William George Granville Venables Vernon-Harcourt (1824–1904), a member of Parliament, served in Liberal governments as home secretary, 1880–85, and chancellor of the exchequer, 1886 and 1892–95.

64. Shakespeare’s fictional character Sir John Falstaff, a fat, vainglorious, cowardly knight, leads into trouble the apparently wayward Prince Hal, who later as King Henry V repudiates his erstwhile boon companion.

65. In the general election of 1892, the Conservatives and Unionists won 313 seats and the Liberals 272; Gladstone’s Liberals were able to govern only with the support of the Irish Parliamentary Party, which won eighty-one seats.

66. In the general election of 1892, the Liberal Party won 45% of the popular vote and 41% of the seats; the Conservative and Unionist Party (including Liberal Unionists) won 47% of both.

67. Lady Rosebery had become her husband’s driving force and motivation.
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to anyone else. She was a remarkable woman on whom he had leaned, and without her he was maimed.

The Cabinet were all agreed that they would not serve under Harcourt. The party were pretty sure he would not fill the bill. Rosebery became Prime Minister, but Harcourt as Chancellor of the Exchequer\(^6\) and Leader of the House of Commons\(^7\) held the real power. He stipulated for special conditions. He was to decide in a Parliamentary emergency upon the action of the Government in the House of Commons. He must be informed of every detail of Foreign Affairs. He must have the Cabinet called whenever he chose. He must have a share in patronage. In so far as these claims were not unreasonable, there was no need to prefer them. They must in practice have been conceded from day to day. But a formal contract was novel. Rosebery said quite simply that he did not want to be Prime Minister at all, but if he were, he must be a real Prime Minister. However, in the end Harcourt exacted his conditions. The gravamen against him is that he did not keep his side of the pact. Rosebery did not receive fair play from him. On the contrary, he used all his frequent and potent opportunities to torment and harry the Prime Minister and make his position intolerable. Thus Rosebery’s Premiership of less than two years was a period of endless vexation. His only consolation was to win the Derby as Prime Minister twice running, with Ladas and Sir Visto, to the huge scandal of the Nonconformist conscience.\(^7\) Flouted, frustrated, undermined by Lobby intrigue,\(^7\) and finally overwhelmed by the strong surge of Unionist power,\(^7\) Rosebery and with him the Liberals were swept away for ten years in the summer of 1895 into the trough of disunited opposition. He never held office again.

There remained the final stroke. The Armenian massacres of 1896\(^7\) excited the defeated Liberals. They

“T
ev never had to face, as we have done, and still do, the possibility of national ruin. Their main foundations were never shaken. They dwelt in an age of British splendour and unchallenged leadership. The art of government was exercised within a limited sphere. World revolution, mortal defeat, national subjugation, chaotic degeneration, or even national bankruptcy, had not laid steel claws upon their sedate, serene, complacent life. Rosebery flourished in an age of great men and small events.”
clamoured for intervention and strong measures against Turkey. Rosebery with his Foreign Office outlook did not share this mood. He did not voice the party feeling. Mr. Gladstone emerged from his retirement with a tremendous speech recalling Midlothian days. Rosebery resigned the disputed leadership of the Liberal party, and resolved to retire for ever from politics. But he was still under fifty, and life rolled on.

The Boer war brought new cleavages in the Liberal party, which in those days comprised and held in suspended animation all the forces now represented by British Socialism. Rosebery unsparingly supported the war, and with him stood the ablest Liberal statesmen of the future—Asquith, Grey, and Haldane. They formed for mutual protection the Liberal Imperial League. But the spirit of the party was estranged. The rank and file wanted to attack the Tory Government and the war as well. A youngish Welshman, Lloyd George, with fiery mocking tongue said all the things they wished to hear—and even more. Years of barren internal bickering followed. Rosebery could not extricate himself from the political fight, which he now detested in all sincerity. He faced the enmity of the Irish. He bore the aversion of the Radicals and Labour men. He listened wearily to the endless remonstrances of the party press. Still at times his voice rang throughout the land. In his arresting speech at Chesterfield in December, 1901, he called for a meeting at ‘a wayside inn’ which should bring about peace with the valiant, desperate Boer commandos. This was a recognizable factor in bringing about the Treaty of Vereeniging. He took a prominent part in the fight to preserve the Free Trade system, and for a time in 1905 it seemed that he would take his place in a Liberal Restoration. But he lost touch with his friends, or they lost touch with him; and always he reiterated that he would never take office again. So the great Government of 1905 was formed without him, and for nearly a quarter of a century he remained willingly, resolutely, but at the same time unseawisely, the spectator of formidable and fateful events. >>

68. This sentence and the first five words of the next are taken almost verbatim from a letter to Churchill from Rosebery’s biographer the Marquess of Crewe, 11 July 1937 (CHAR 8/548/39), urging him to mention Lady Rosebery’s influence.

69. In other countries, this post might be termed minister of finance.

70. When Gladstone resigned as prime minister in 1894, a general election was not required, because the existing House of Commons had been elected less than two years earlier. Queen Victoria chose Rosebery to succeed Gladstone as prime minister, which meant that he became Liberal party leader only in the House of Lords. Harcourt served as party leader in the House of Commons. The increasing ascendancy of the House of Commons gave Harcourt significant power.

71. The Nonconformist conscience grew out of Evangelicalism, which in turn derived from Puritanism. It strongly encouraged the ascetic life, in which such modest pleasures as theatregoing, dancing, and card playing were taboo. This attitude particularly applied to horse racing, in which the perceived sin of gambling played an integral role and tended to attract tipsters, pickpockets, and other persons of dubious character.

72. The lobby at the entrance to each House of Parliament, where members and peers can chat informally and meet members of the press, is the site of much unofficial business and gossip.

73. Since the beginning of April 1895, the Liberals had lost four usually safe seats to the Conservatives and Unionists in by-elections, and in June 1895 Rosebery resigned. In the ensuing general election, the Liberals were crushed, winning only 177 seats; the Conservatives and Unionists won 411 seats and formed a government under the 3rd Marquess of Salisbury.

74. In the 1890s a steady parade of Christian ethnic groups seceded from the Ottoman Empire with support from abroad. The Armenians grew restive, with Russia stoking nationalist sentiment. Turks, fearing that the Armenians would become a fifth column for the Russians, armed the rival Kurds, who killed many Armenians in eastern Anatolia in 1894–96; estimates of the number of victims vary from 80,000 to 300,000.

75. Roused from retirement in autumn 1894, Gladstone demanded that Rosebery’s government respond vigorously to the Armenian massacres. He again took the stage in 1896, after Rosebery had left office, to advocate a European crusade, or unilateral British action, against “the great assassin.”

76. On 6 October 1896.

77. Sir Edward Grey, Br. (1882–1933), First Viscount Grey of Falloodon, 1916, foreign secretary, 1905–16. On 3 August 1914, on the eve of Britain’s entry into the First World War, Grey memorably said, “The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime.”

78. Richard Burdon Sanderson Haldane (1856–1928), First Viscount Haldane, 1911. Having been lord chancellor as a Liberal in 1912–15, he became a Labour Party supporter and held the same post in the first Labour government in 1924.

79. Disorganization in the party caused some Liberal Imperialists to form the Imperial Liberal Council in 1900, but not until 1901 did prominent Liberal Imperialists become associated with the council. Later that year its title was changed to the Liberal Imperial League. In 1902, Rosebery helped to form the Liberal League, into which the Liberal Imperial League was then absorbed.

80. A lifelong Liberal, David Lloyd George (1863–1945), First Earl Lloyd George of Dwyfor, 1945, was prime minister in a coalition government, 1916–22. He was Churchill’s close ally and mentor after Churchill joined the Liberals in 1904.

81. Responding to Liberal dissatisfaction with the leadership of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman (1836–1908), Rosebery made an unexpected and electrifying speech at Chesterfield on 16 December 1901. Flanked by Asquith and Grey, he swept away supporters’ doubts about his political skills by calling for negotiations with the Boers and a policy of magnanimity toward them. The principles of the Treaty of Vereeniging in 1902 were almost identical to those Rosebery urged at Chesterfield.

82. The peace treaty ending the Boer War was negotiated at Vereeniging, in the Transvaal, thirty miles south of Johannesburg, and signed at Pretoria on 31 May 1902. The Boers surrendered and were promised eventual self-government for the Transvaal and the Orange Free State under the sovereignty of the British Crown. This first step was implemented in 1906–07, largely because of Churchill’s work as under-secretary of state for the colonies.

83. Churchill began his ministerial career in this Liberal administration, holding five successive posts over a ten-year period: undersecretary of state for the colonies, 1905–8; president of the Board of Trade, 1908–10; home secretary, 1910–11; first lord of the admiralty, 1911–15; and (in Asquith’s coalition) chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster, 1915.
It was in the sphere of Foreign Affairs that Rosebery found his home. Here he was Master. He combined the knowledge of the historian or of a Foreign Office official with the practical understanding and the habit of command of a Statesman.

He did not have to form his views from the files of papers set before him. He knew the whole long history about how all these nations had lived their lives for two or three hundred years, and what they had fought about, and which ones had been subjugated and were boiling with ancient wrongs under the smooth surface of modernism. He knew with pregnant conviction much that other leading men in England—and may we add the United States—only found out during and after the Peace Conference. He knew not only the British share in bygone events, but the whole European tale. Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia—then unborn—the failings and vitalities of partitioned Poland, and the vanished Empire of Stephen Doshan, were—no doubt under other symbols—living realities to him. He felt in his bones, with his fingertips, all that subterranean, subconscious movement whereby the vast antagonisms of the Great War were slowly, remorselessly, inexorably assembling. He had laboriously inspected the foundations of European Peace; he saw where the cracks were, and where a subsidence would produce a crash. His heart responded instinctively to any readjustment or disturbance of the balance of power. In Rosebery’s time Foreign Affairs and war dangers were invested with a false glamour and shrouded in opaque ignorance. But when some schoolteacher was dismissed in Upper Silesia Rosebery said to me, ‘All Prussia has been shaken.’ When Delcasse was forced to resign, he said that the German Army corps were afoot. And when Lord Lansdowne signed the Anglo-French Agreement of August, 1904, with all the prestige of the Conservative Party behind him, and amid the tributes of Liberals and Pacifists all over the world, Rosebery said in public that ‘it was far more likely to lead to War than to Peace.’

This last I conceive to be the greatest proof of his insight. I was a very young man at the time, but I recall the situation vividly. The Conservative reign was in its plenitude. But there was the perennial quarrel with France—gunboats at Bangkok; later the French resentments about Fashoda; all the Liberals crying out for peace, for reconciliation with France, for the lifting of a dangerous and vibrant animosity. ‘Let us settle with our nearest neighbour. Let us make mutual concessions and have no more fears of war with France.’ Rarely has national agreement been more complete. The Foreign Secretary moved forward amid general, nay almost universal applause. The pact

“This last I conceive to be the greatest proof of his insight... The [1904] pact between England and France was made, all the small disputes were swept away amid sincere rejoicings. Only one voice—Rosebery’s—was raised in discord: in public ‘Far more likely to lead to War than to Peace’; in private ‘Straight to War.’”
between England and France was made, all the small disputes were swept away amid sincere rejoicings. Only one voice—Rosebery’s—was raised in discord: in public ‘Far more likely to lead to War than to Peace’; in private ‘Straight to War.’

It must not be thought that I regret the decisions which were in fact taken. I do not think that any movements on the European chessboard could have prevented the challenge to world peace sooner or later of the ever-growing overweening military power and temper of Germany. The occasion would have been different, the hour might have been delayed, the grouping of Powers might not have been the same; but given the world as it was at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, I doubt if anything could have averted the hideous collision. And if it had to come, we must thank God it came in such a way that the world was with us through the conflict.

There was another sphere in which Rosebery moved with confidence and distinction. He was one of those men of affairs who add to the unsure prestige of a minister and the fleeting successes of an orator the more enduring achievements of literature. Some of his most polished work is found in his Rectorial Addresses and in his appreciations of great poets and writers like Burns and Stevenson. His private letters, of which he wrote so many, are alive with Byronic wit and colour. His style, lucid, pointed, musical and restrained, was an admirable vehicle for conveying his treasure of historical research to the world. He has enriched our language with a series of biographical studies, terse, pregnant and authoritative, which will long be read with pleasure and instruction on both sides of the Atlantic. Pitt, Peel, Randolph Churchill, are literary gems, and on the larger scale Chatham and Napoleon make definite contributions to the judgment of history. Yet even in this field there are some characteristic, self-imposed limitations. He never planned or executed a work of the first magnitude—a work to hold the field against all comers for a century. His taste, discernment, and learning were directed to partial tasks, and in these he attracts and stimulates the reader, only to leave his main curiosities unsatisfied. Rosebery’s >>

84. The Paris Peace Conference of 1919, held to resolve the plethora of problems resulting from the First World War.
85. Yugoslavia—the land of the South Slavs—was created on 1 December 1918, in the wake of the First World War and the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. Initially it consisted of Serbia and territories occupied by Serbs, Croats, and Slovenses; later Montenegro, non-Greek parts of Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina joined the new country. Yugoslavia disintegrated into its constituent parts, including Kosovo, between 1991 and 2008. Czechoslovakia emerged from the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in October 1918 and, apart from the upheavals between 1938 and 1945, remained a single entity until it peacefully split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993.
86. Poland endured many partitions over the centuries. The most recent of these prior to the First World War was imposed in 1815 after the Napoleonic Wars, when Poland became largely a Russian puppet state.
87. Stefan Uroś IV Dušan (ca. 1308–1355), King of Serbia from 1331 and Czar of the Serbs and Greeks from 1345. Under his rule, Serbia reached its territorial peak as one of the larger states of Europe.
88. Most of Upper Silesia became part of Prussia in 1742. After 1918 the eastern part was transferred to Poland, and after 1945 most of the remainder was similarly annexed.
89. Théophile Delcassé (1852–1923), French minister of foreign affairs, 1898–1905, was instrumental in achieving the Entente Cordiale between France and Britain in 1904. When the Germans, suspicious of this agreement, began pressing Delcassé, the French prime ministerwavered in supporting his foreign minister. Delcassé resigned.
90. Henry Charles Keith Petty-Fitzmaurice (1845–1927), Fifth Marquess of Lansdowne, 1866, who as foreign secretary signed the Entente Cordiale with France.
91. Better known as the Entente Cordiale, this agreement of 8 April 1904 (not August 1904, as Churchill mistakenly states), ended a millennium of suspicion and intermittent conflict between Britain and France, and began a long period of peaceful coexistence, alliance and friendship. It brought the two countries into a tacit alliance against German interests.
92. Rosebery is reported to have said on 4 August 1904, “My mournful and supreme conviction in the matter is that this Agreement is much more likely to lead to complication than to peace.” See the Marquess of Crewe, Lord Rosebery, 2:581.
93. In 1893 the French had sent gunboats to Bangkok. Rosebery, as foreign secretary, retaliated by sending British ships to preserve the buffer state of Siam between Laos in French Indo-china and British Burma. The French declared a blockade. The crisis passed after negotiations but was not finally resolved until January 1896.
94. French feelings of national pride were inflamed when French forces gave way to the British at Fashoda on the upper Nile in 1898. Intending to establish a French protectorate in the region, a French force of 150 men under Major Jean-Baptiste Marchand (1863–1934) had trekked for fourteen months from Africa's west coast to Fashoda, arriving on 10 April 1898. But (Horatio) Herbert Kitchener (1850–1916), First Earl Kitchener of Khartoum, 1914, fresh from his victory at Omdurman, arrived with a powerful flotilla of British gunboats on September 18th. The French—isolated, outnumbered, and vulnerable—were obliged to withdraw. The territorial dispute sparked fears of war between France and Britain.
95. Each of the older Scottish universities has a rector, elected by the students, to chair the university’s court, which oversees management of the establishment, providing strategic leadership and accountability. Rosebery held rectorships at Aberdeen (1878–81), Edinburgh (1882–83), Glasgow (1879, 1899–1902) and St. Andrews (1885, 1910–13).
96. Robert Burns (1759–1796), regarded as Scotland’s national poet.
97. Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894), author and poet best known for such books as Treasure Island (1883), The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886), Kidnapped (1886) and Catriona (1893).
98. George Gordon Byron (1788–1824), Sixth Baron Byron, 1798, was a leading poet of the Romantic movement. He was well known for his aristocratic excesses, huge debts, numerous love affairs, and self-imposed exile in Italy and Greece; Lady Caroline Lamb (1785–1828), with whom he carried on an affair, famously described him as “mad, bad, and dangerous to know.”
100. Lord Rosebery, Sir Robert Peel (London: Cassell, 1899).
102. Lord Rosebery, Napoleon: The Last Phase (London: Arthur L. Humphreys, 1900).
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*Chatham* ends before the great period has begun: his *Napoleon* begins only when it has ended. We are excited; we demand more; we seek the climax. But the author has retired again to his solitudes. The curtain is pulled down and the gleaming lights extinguished—and now, alas, extinguished for ever.

The war he had dreaded came to pass by the paths he had foreseen, but his heart beat high for Britain. His younger son, the charming, gifted Neil, was killed in Palestine.*¹⁰³* The old man sank, bowed and broken under the blow. Years of infirmity followed, and what to an Imperial spirit must ever be a pang—powerlessness. A month before the Armistice he had a stroke. He lay unconscious or delirious in a small house in Edinburgh when the bells of victory rang through its streets. The Scots do not easily forget those who have been their leaders. Spontaneously in the joy of the hour a great crowd gathered with torches and beset his door in thousands to share their triumph with him. But he lay stricken, prostrate, paralysed.*¹⁰⁴*

He lived for ten years more, and all the qualities of his mind resumed their play. He reached the age of eighty. If he enjoyed life in a mild way from week to week, he also thought of Death as a deliverance. He made one statement which should be helpful to all of us. For some time he had received a special Insulin treatment.*¹⁰⁵* One day by mistake the dose was doubled. He fell down in a total stupor, and his attendants were sure the end had come. He remained in this condition for many hours. His daughter, Lady Crewe, summoned from Paris,*¹⁰⁶* reached his bedside the next morning and to her relief and surprise found him alive with his mental faculties restored. ‘If this is Death’ he said with the air of one who has been on a voyage and made a dis-

covery, ‘it is absolutely nothing.’

He was happy and at peace: but his steps became more weary. Although a religious man, a regular Church-goer, and a frequent Communicant, he made one odd, characteristic preparation for his departure. He bade his servant buy a gramophone, and told him that when Death came upon him, he was to make it play the *Eton Boating Song.*¹⁰⁷* This was actually done, though perhaps he did not hear it. Thus he wished the gay memories of boyhood to be around him at his end, and thus he set Death in its proper place as a necessary and unalarming process.

One more trait must be recorded, his love of Scotland and his pride in the Scottish race and in their history. His words a quarter of a century earlier at the unveiling of the memorial to the officers and men of the Royal Scots Greys killed in South Africa may well form the epilogue to his own life.*¹⁰⁸*

‘*H*onour to the brave*¹⁰⁹*

who will return no more.

We shall not see their faces again. In the service of their Sovereign and their country they have undergone the sharpness of death, and sleep their eternal sleep, thousands of miles away in the green solitudes of Africa. Their places, their comrades, their saddles will know them no more, for they will never return to us as we knew them. But in a nobler and higher sense, have they not returned to us to-day? They return to us with a message of duty, of courage, of patriotism. They return to us with a memory of high duty faithfully performed; they return to us with the inspiration of their example. Peace, then, to their dust, honour to their memory. Scotland for ever!’¹¹⁰*
Did Churchill Ever Admire Hitler?

The Hitler Articles and Great Contemporaries

One of the most controversial chapters in Great Contemporaries (and in the opinion of scholars the one least like the rest) is “Hitler and His Choice.” Some critics maintain that the essay implies approval of Hitler, rendering Churchill a hypocrite. Others ask if the Great Contemporaries version was a milder form of an earlier article—and if so, whether Churchill pulled his punches.

(Paintings: National Archives and Wikimedia Commons.)

The Hitler chapter in Great Contemporaries, like the rest of the book, was derived from a previous article. In this case the original was “The Truth about Hitler,” in The Strand Magazine of November 1935 (Cohen C481). Ronald Cohen notes that Strand editor Reeves Shaw, who paid him £250 for the article, wanted Churchill to make it “as outspoken as you possibly can…absolutely frank in your judgment of [Hitler’s] methods.” It was.

Two years later, when Churchill was preparing his Hitler essay for Great Contemporaries, he characteristically submitted it to the Foreign Office, which asked that he tone it down. Preferring that he not publish it at all, they were somewhat mollified by the result. (See Martin Gilbert, Churchill: A Life, London: Heinemann, 1991, 580-81). Nonetheless, the belief has persisted that Churchill wrote approvingly of Hitler, in either his book or his article—or in other writings for the British press.

“Government by Dictators”

On 10 October 1937, six days after publication of Great Contemporaries, Churchill published an article, “This Age of Government by Great Dictators,” his seventh installment in the series “Great Events of Our Time” for News of the World (Cohen C535.7). Here he traced the evolution of British democracy from the feudal ages, the destruction of continental monarchies during the Great War, and the rise of the Bolsheviks, Fascists and Nazis. His Hitler paragraphs in this piece are mainly—but not wholly—from his Great Contemporaries text.

In his opening about Hitler, Churchill retained the >>
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language from his 1935 Strand article which he had combed out of Great Contemporaries, speaking of Hitler’s “guilt of blood” and “wicked” methods. He then inserts two sentences from the Strand which are omitted from his book. (This article is available from the editor by email):

It is on this mystery of the future that history will pronounce Hitler either a monster or a hero. It is this which will determine whether he will rank in Valhalla with Pericles, with Augustus and with Washington, or walter in the inferno of human scorn with Attila and Tamerlane.

Were those words from his Strand piece retained in defiance of the Foreign Office’s wishes? Or were they there because Churchill was too good a writer not to re-use good words carefully composed two years earlier? Whatever the reason, they do not materially change Churchill’s view of Hitler—and his considerable doubt that history would come to regard Hitler in a positive light.

“Friendship with Germany”

Churchill’s critics sometimes quote sentences which they think came from these articles or Great Contemporaries:

One may dislike Hitler’s system and yet admire his patriotic achievement. If our country were defeated, I hope we should find a champion as indomitable to restore our courage and lead us back to our place among the nations.


Churchill wrote: “I find myself pilloried by Dr. Goebbels’ Press as an enemy of Germany. That description is quite untrue.” He had made many efforts on Germany’s behalf in recent years, Churchill continued, but it was his duty to warn against German rearmament: “I can quite understand that this action of mine would not be popular in Germany. Indeed, it was not popular anywhere. I was told I was making ill-will between the two countries.”

Then Churchill adds something that is perhaps relevant to present-day situations:

I drew attention to a serious danger to Anglo-German relations which arises out of the organisation of German residents in Britain into a closely-knit, strictly disciplined body. We could never allow foreign visitors to pursue their national feuds in the bosom of our country, still less to be organised in such a way as to affect our military security. The Germans would not tolerate it for a moment in their country, nor should they take it amiss because we do not like it in ours.

Pleasing No One

Churchill was right to declare that his writings about Hitler satisfied neither the Nazis’ defenders nor their critics. One of the defenders was Lord Londonderry, an appeaser who complained that Churchill’s Evening Standard piece would prevent a decent understanding with Germany. On 23 October 1937, Churchill replied to Lord Londonderry (Gilbert, Churchill: A Life, 581):

You cannot expect English people to be attracted by the brutal intolerances of Nazidom, though these may fade with time. On the other hand, we all wish to live on friendly terms with Germany. We know that the best Germans are ashamed of the Nazi excesses, and recoil from the paganism on which they are based. We certainly do not wish to pursue a policy inimical to the legitimate interests of Germany, but you must surely be aware that when the German Government speaks of friendship with England, what they mean is that we shall give them back their former Colonies, and also agree to their having a free hand so far as we are concerned in Central and Southern Europe. This means that they would devour Austria and Czechoslovakia as a preliminary to making a gigantic middle-Europe bloc. It would certainly not be in our interest to connive at such policies of aggression. It would be wrong and cynical in the last degree to buy immunity for ourselves at the expense of the smaller countries of Central Europe. It would be contrary to the whole tide of British and United States opinion for us to facilitate the spread of Nazi tyranny over countries which now have a considerable measure of democratic freedom.

It is possible now, with hindsight knowledge of what Hitler really was, to scoff at Churchill for failing to go all out against him in his writings of 1935-37. In fact, he had told the truth about Hitler from the beginning, but tempered his later writing in an effort to meet the wishes of the Foreign Office—which was certain that Hitler could be handled, if only they didn’t upset him. Nevertheless, as Sir Martin Gilbert wrote: “neither the toned-down essay [in Great Contemporaries] nor the conciliatory article in the Evening Standard marked any change in Churchill’s attitude. . . .”

When Churchill writes about buying immunity from a “gigantic bloc” marked by brutal intolerance, one is reminded of certain parallels with the policies of Western democracies toward similar fanatics in our own time.
COMPARATIVE TEXTS

“The Truth about Hitler,” 1935
“Hitler and His Choice,” 1937

How different was Churchill’s first Hitler article from his chapter in in Great Contemporaries? Let readers decide!
Ronald I. Cohen herein provides the complete text of the original Strand article, showing (in colored type and strike-outs), what Churchill altered in Great Contemporaries. This is incidentally instructive on WSC’s skill as an editor. Note: Some paragraphing differs; for example, paragraph 3 below is part of paragraph 2 in Great Contemporaries.

It is not possible to form a just judgment of a public figure who has attained the enormous dimensions of Adolf Hitler until his life work as a whole is before us. Although no subsequent political action can condone wrong deeds or remove the guilt of blood, history is replete with examples of men who have risen to power by employing stern, grim, wicked, and even frightful methods, but who, nevertheless, when their life is revealed as a whole, have been regarded as great figures whose lives have enriched the story of mankind. So may it be with Hitler.

Such a final view is not vouchsafed to us to-day.* We cannot tell whether Hitler will be the man who will once again let loose upon the world another war in which civilization will irretrievably succumb, or whether he will go down in history as the man who restored honour and peace of mind to the great Germanic nation and brought it back serene, helpful and strong, to the forefront of the European family circle.

It is on this mystery of the future that history will pronounce Hitler either a monster or a hero. It is this which will determine whether he will rank in Valhalla with Pericles, with Augustus, and with Washington, or walter in the inferno of human scorn with Attila and Tamerlane. It is enough to say that both possibilities are open at the present moment. If, because the story is unfinished, because, indeed, its most fateful chapters have yet to be written, we are forced to dwell upon the darker side of his work and creed, we must never forget nor cease to hope for the bright alternative.

Adolf Hitler was the child of the rage and grief of a mighty empire and race which had suffered overwhelming defeat in war. He it was who exorcized the spirit of despair from the German mind by substituting the not less baleful but far less morbid spirit of revenge. When the terrible German armies, which had held half Europe in their grip, recoiled on every front, and sought armistice from those upon whose lands even then they still stood as invaders; when the pride and will-power of the Prussian race broke into surrender and revolution behind the fighting lines; when that Imperial Government, which had been for more than fifty fearful months the terror of almost all nations, collapsed ignominiously, leaving its loyal faithful subjects defenceless and disarmed before the wrath of the sorely wounded, victorious Allies; then it was that one Austrian corporal, a former Austrian house-painter, set out to regain all.

In the fifteen years that have followed this resolve he has succeeded in restoring Germany to the most powerful >>

*Written in 1935

WINSTON S. CHURCHILL

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position in Europe, and not only has he restored the position of his country, but he has even, to a very large extent, reversed the results of the Great War. Sir John Simon said at Berlin that, as Foreign Secretary, he made no distinction between victors and vanquished. Such distinctions, indeed, still exist, but the vanquished are in process of becoming the victors, and the victors the vanquished. When Hitler began, Germany lay prostrate at the feet of the Allies. He may yet see the day when what is left of Europe will be prostrate at the feet of Germany. Whatever else may be thought about these exploits, they are certainly among the most remarkable in the whole history of the world.

Hitler’s success, and, indeed, his survival as a political force, would not have been possible but for the lethargy and folly of the French and British Governments since the War, and especially in the last three years.* No sincere attempt was made to come to terms with the various moderate governments of Germany, which existed upon a parliamentary system. For a long time the French pursued the absurd delusion that they could extract vast indemnities from the Germans in order to compensate them for the devastation of the War. *1932-35

Figures of reparation payments were adopted, not only by the French but by the British, which had no relation whatever to any process which exists, or could ever be devised, of transferring wealth from one community to another. To enforce submission to these senseless demands, French armies actually reoccupied the Ruhr in 1923. To recover even a tenth of what was originally demanded, an inter-allied board, presided over by an able American, supervised the internal finances of Germany for several years, thus renewing and perpetuating the utmost bitterness in the minds of the defeated nation. In fact, nothing was gained at the cost of all this friction; for, although the Allies extracted about one thousand million pounds’ worth of assets from the Germans, the United States, and to a lesser extent Great Britain, lent Germany at the same time over two thousand millions more than she had paid. Yet, while the Allies poured their wealth into Germany to build her up and revive her life and industry, the only results were an increasing resentment and the loss of their money. Even while Germany was receiving great benefits by the loans which were made to her, Hitler’s movement gained each week life and force from irritation at Allied interference.

I have always laid down the doctrine that the redress of the grievances of the vanquished should precede the disarmament of the victors. Little was done to redress the grievances of the treaties of Versailles and Trianon. Hitler in his campaign could point continually to a number of minor anomalies and racial injustices in the territorial arrangements of Europe, which fed the fires on which he lived.

At the same time, the English pacifists, aided from a safe distance by their American prototypes, forced the process of disarmament into the utmost prominence. Year after year, without the slightest regard to the realities of the world, the Disarmament Commission explored innumerable schemes for reducing the armaments of the Allies, none of which was pursued with any sincerity by any country except Great Britain. The United States, while preaching disarmament, continued to make enormous developments in her army, navy, and air force. France, deprived of the promised United States guarantee and confronted with the gradual revival of Germany with its tremendous military population, naturally refused to reduce her defences below the danger point. Italy, for other reasons, increased her armaments. Only England cut her defences by land and sea far below the safety level, and appeared quite unconscious of the new peril which was developing in the air.

Meanwhile, the Germans, principally under the Brüning Government, began their great plans to regain their armed power. These were pressed forward by every channel. The air-sport Air-sport and commercial aviation became a mere cloak behind which a tremendous organization for the purposes of air war was spread over every part of Germany. The German general General Staff; forbidden by the treaty, grew year by year to an enormous size under the guise of the State guidance of industry. All the factories of Germany were prepared in incredible detail to be turned to war production.

These preparations, although assiduously concealed, were nevertheless known to the intelligence departments both of France and Great Britain. But nowhere in either of these governments was there the commanding power either to call Germany to a halt or to endeavour to revise the treaties, or better still both. The former first course would have been quite safe and easy, at any rate, until the end of 1931, but at that time Mr. MacDonald and his colleagues were still contending themselves with uttering high-sounding platitudes upon the blessings of peace and gaining the applause of well-meaning but ill-informed majorities throughout our island. Even as late as 1932 the greatest pressure was put by the British Government upon France to reduce her armed strength, when at the same time the French knew that immense preparations were going forward in all parts of Germany. I explained and exposed the follies of this process repeatedly and in detail in the House of Commons, but nobody paid the slightest attention. Eventually, all that came out of the Disarmament conferences was the Rearmament Re-armament of Germany.

While all these formidable transformations were occurring in Europe, Corporal Hitler was fighting his long-wearing battle for the German heart. The story of that struggle cannot be read without admiration for the courage, the single-mindedness, perseverance, and the personal vital force which enabled him to challenge, defy, overcome, or conciliate, or overcome all the authorities or resistances.
which barred his path. He, and the ever-increasing legions who worked with him, certainly showed at this time, in their patriotic ardour and love of country, that there was nothing they would not do or dare, no sacrifice of life, limb or liberty that they would not make themselves or inflict upon their opponents.

Here is no place to tell that tale. The main episodes of the story are well known. The riotous meetings, the bloody fusillade at Munich, Hitler’s imprisonment, his various arrests and trials, his conflict with Hindenburg, his electoral campaign, von Papen’s tergiversation, Hitler’s conquest of Hindenburg, Hindenburg’s desertion of Brüning — all these were the milestones upon that indomitable march which carried the Austrian-born corpse to the life-dictatorship of the entire German nation of nearly seventy million souls, constituting the most industrious, capable, tractable, fierce, militaristic and resentful martial race in the world.

Hitler arrived at supreme power in Germany at the head of a National Socialist movement which wiped out all the states and old kingdoms of Germany and fused them into one whole. At the same time, Nazidom suppressed and obliterated by force, wherever necessary, all other parties in the State. At this very moment he found that the secret organization of German industry and aviation, which the German general staff and latterly the Brüning Government had built up, was in fact absolutely ready to be put into operation.

So far, no one had dared to take this step. Fear that the Allies would intervene and nip everything in the bud, had restrained them. But Hitler had risen by violence and passion; he was surrounded by men as ruthless as he. It is probable that, when he overthrew the existing constitutional Government of Germany, he did not know how far they had prepared the ground for his action; action; certainly he has never done them the justice to recognize their contribution to his success. He even drove the patriotic Brüning under threat of murder, from German soil.

The fact remains that all he and Goering had to do was to give the signal for the most gigantic process of secret re-armament that has ever taken place. He had long proclaimed that, if he came into power, he would do two things that no one else could do for Germany but himself. First, he would restore Germany to the height of her power in Europe, and secondly, he would cure the cruel unemployment that afflicted the people.

His methods are now apparent. Germany was to recover her place in Europe by rearming, and the Germans were to be largely freed from the curse of unemployment by being set to work on making the armaments and other military preparations. Thus from the year 1933 onwards the whole available energies of Germany were directed to preparations for war, not only in the factories, in the barracks, and on the aviation grounds, but in the schools, the colleges, and almost in the nursery, by every resource of State power and modern propaganda; and the preparation and education of the whole people for war-readiness was undertaken.

It was not till 1935 that the full terror of this revelation broke upon the careless and imprudent world, and Hitler, casting aside concealment, sprang forward armed to the teeth, with his munition factories roaring night and day, his aeroplane squadrons forming in ceaseless succession, his submarine crews exercising in the Baltic, and his armed hosts tramping the barracks squares from one end of the broad Reich to the other. That is where we are to-day, and the achievement by which the tables have been completely turned upon the complacent, faceless, and purblind victors deserves to be reckoned a prodigy in the history of the world, and a prodigy which is inseparable from the personal exertions and life-thrust of a single man.

It is certainly not strange that everyone should want to know the ‘truth about Hitler.’ What will he do with the tremendous powers already in his grasp and perfecting themselves week by week? If, as I have said, we look only at the past, which is all we have to judge by, we must indeed feel anxious. Hitherto, Hitler’s triumphant career has been borne onwards, not only by a passionate love of Germany, but by currents of hatred so intense as to sear the souls of those who swim upon them. Hatred of the French is the first of these currents, and we have only to read Hitler’s book, Mein Kampf, to see that the French are not the only foreign nation against whom the anger of rearmed Germany may be turned.

But the internal stresses are even more striking. The Jews, supposed to have contributed, by a disloyal and pacifist influence, to the collapse of Germany at the end of the Great War, were also deemed to be the main prop of communism and the authors of defeatist doctrines in every form. Therefore, the Jews of Germany, a community numbered by many hundreds of thousands, were to be stripped of all power, driven from every position in public and social life, expelled from the professions, silenced in the Press, and declared a foul and odious race. The twentieth century has witnessed with surprise, not merely the promulgation of these ferocious doctrines, but their being enforced with brutal vigour by the Government and by the populace. No past services, no proved patriotism, even wounds sustained in war, could procure immunity for persons whose only crime was that their parents had brought them into the world. Every kind of persecution, grave or petty, upon the world-famous scientists, writers, and composers at the top down to the wretched little Jewish children in the national schools, was practised, was glorified; and is still being practised and glorified.

A similar proscription fell upon Socialists and Communists of every hue. The Trade Unionists and liberal intelligentsia are equally smitten. The slightest criticism is >>
an offence against the State. The courts of justice, though allowed to function in ordinary cases, are superseded for every form of political offence by so-called people’s courts composed of ardent Nazis. Side by side with the training grounds of the new armies and the great aerodromes, the concentration camps pock-mark the German soil. In these, thousands of Germans are coerced and cowed into submission to the irresistible power of the Totalitarian State.

The hatred of the Jews led by a logical transition to an attack upon the historic historical basis of Christianity. Thus the conflict broadened swiftly, and Catholic priests and Protestant pastors fell under the ban of what is becoming the new religion of the German peoples, namely, the worship of Germany under the symbols of the old gods of Nordic paganism. Here also is where we stand to-day.

What manner of man is this grim figure who has performed these superb toils and loosed these frightful evils? Does he still share the passions he has evoked? Does he, in the full sunlight of worldly success, triumph, at the head of the great nation he has raised from the dust, still feel racked by the hatreds and antagonisms of his desperate struggle; or will they be discarded like the amour and the cruel weapons of strife under the mellowing influences of success? Evidently a burning question for men of all nations! Those who have met Herr Hitler face to face in public business or on social terms have found a highly competent, cool, well-informed functionary with an agreeable manner, a disarming smile, and few have been unaffected by a subtle personal magnetism. Nor is this impression merely the dazzle of power. He exerted it on his companions at every stage in his struggle, even when his fortunes were in the lowest depths. Thus the world lives on hopes that the worst is over, and that we may yet live to see Hitler a gentler figure in a happier age.

Meanwhile, he makes speeches to the nations, which are sometimes characterized by candour and moderation. Recently he has offered many words of reassurance, eagerly lapped up by those who have been so tragically wrong about Germany in the past. Only time can show, but, meanwhile, the great wheels revolve; the rifles, the cannon, the tanks, the shot and shell, shells, the air-bombs, the poison-gas cylinders, the aeroplanes, the submarines, and now the beginnings of a fleet flow in ever-broadening streams from the already largely war-mobilized arsenals and factories of Germany.

Note on the passage at right: These final paragraphs of the 1935 Strand article were stricken from Great Contemporaries—which, according to a letter from the Foreign Office to Churchill, quoted in the ISI Books edition, took “a great deal of the sting out.” Rather than confront readers with lengthy strike-throughs, we have shaded them for easy readability. —Ed.

In the annals of the new triumphant Germany there is a lurid anniversary. It is the 30th of June. On that night last year many hundreds of men and some women were put to death in Germany without law, without accusation, without trial. These persons represented many varieties of life and thought of Germany. There were Nazis and anti-Nazis. There were Generals and Communists; there were Jews, Protestants, and Catholics. Some were rich and some were poor; some were young and some were old; some were famous and some were humble. But all had one thing in common, namely, that they were deemed to be obnoxious or obstructive to the Hitler regime. Therefore, they were blotted out.

Armed police caught them in the streets, shot them in their beds, shot the wife who threw herself before her husband, dragged all manner of people to the different gaols – killed some on the way – sent others to face the firing parties on the outskirts of Berlin. The sinister volleys succeeded each other through a long morning, afternoon, and night. The relations who ventured to inquire for the missing father, brother or son received, after a considerable interval, a small urn containing cremated ashes.

The history of the world is full of gruesome, squalid episodes of this kind, from the butcheries of ancient Rome and the numberless massacres which have stained the history of Asia down to the “smellings out” of the Zulu and Hottentot witch-doctors. But in all its ups and downs mankind has always recoiled in horror from such events; and every record which has pretended to be that of a civilized race has proclaimed its derestation of them.

Adolf Hitler took upon himself the full responsibility. It is true that he explained that many more people were murdered – for I call the slaughter of a human being in peace without trial murder – who were not on his list. Zealous lieutenants we are assured filled in the gaps, sometimes with public, and sometimes with their own private enemies; and some of them were executed themselves for having overstepped the mark. What a mark!

But the astounding thing is that the great German people, educated, scientific, philosophical, romantic, the people of Christmas tree, the people of Goethe and Schiller, of Bach and Beethoven, Heine, Leibnitz, Kant, and a hundred other great names, have not only not resented this horrible blood-bath, but have endorsed it and acclaimed its author with the honours not only of a sovereign but almost of a God. Here is the frightful fact before which what is left of European civilization must bow its head in shame, and what is to more practical purpose, in fear.

Can we really believe that a hierarchy and society built upon such deeds can be entrusted with the possession of the most prodigious military machinery yet planned among men? Can we believe that by such powers the world may regain “the joy, the peace and glory of mankind”? The answer, if answer there be, other than the most appalling negative, is contained in that mystery called Hitler.
HMS Renown, 19 September 1943

I have a photograph of Prime Minister Winston Churchill, his wife and daughter and Brendan Bracken, saying good-bye to a ship’s captain, dated 19 September 1943. It was taken by my father, John Knowles, who served on that ship. Are you able to provide me with details of the ship and the occasion?

—Tina Knowles Billing, Australia.

The ship is the battle-cruiser HMS Renown (1916-1948). In “Glimpses from the ‘Taxi’” (FH 113: 24-25), Vic Humphries, who served as a radar operator, discussed Renown’s two voyages with Churchill. The first was from Halifax to the Clyde after the “Quadrant” Conference with Roosevelt at Quebec. Your father’s photograph was taken when the Churchills were leaving the ship in Scotland. The Prime Minister was aboard for another voyage, from Plymouth to Alexandria in November 1943, for a meeting with Roosevelt before Teheran. Churchill’s daughter Mary was his aide-de-camp on the first voyage, his daughter Sarah on the second. Mary (as she recounts in her new book, A Daughter’s Tale; reviewed in FH 153:43) was almost washed overboard in the high seas.

Launched in 1916, HMS Renown was the lead ship of her class of fast battleships promoted by Churchill and Lord Fisher at the Admiralty in World War I. Along with her sister ship, HMS Repulse, she was the world’s fastest capital vessel, capable of over 31 knots. She saw no combat and was rebuilt in 1921, serving as transportation on royal tours by the Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII) and his brother the Duke of York (later George VI). Rebuilt again just before World War II, Renown participated in the hunt for the Graf Spee in 1939, the Norwegian campaign of April-June 1940, and the search for the Bismarck in 1941. She served as an escort to convoys in the Mediterranean and Arctic in 1941-42 before two tours of duty as Churchill’s “taxi.” In 1944, as part of the Eastern Fleet, she took part in attacks on Japanese-held Indonesia and various Indian Ocean islands. Placed in reserve at the end of the war, she was sold for scrap in 1948.
125 YEARS AGO
Autumn 1887 • Age 12
“Very much astonished...”

September 27th found Winston again imploring his mother to send him a copy of H. Rider Haggard’s novel She: “I am afraid you have forgotten all about ‘She’ please remember as I am longing to read it.” Yet by October 11th, he wrote, “I no longer want ‘She’ as my time is sufficiently filled up now.” Perhaps he had by then found a copy locally.

Lord Randolph remained out of office, but that had not slackened demand for his autograph, which Winston was selling to fellow students at Brighton. On October 8th, after learning he was being sent next year to Harrow, he reminded Lord Randolph, “Please do not forget the autographs.” He added, “I am very glad to hear that I am going to Harrow & not to Winchester.” Three days later he wrote his mother that he was “very much astonished at the news about Harrow.” Since Winston was not shy about expressing his opinions to his mother, it is curious that he didn’t ask why his parents had chosen Harrow.

Cognizant that November 30th was approaching, he wrote his mother in late October, “I suppose you are coming down for my birthday, I also suppose that we are going to have a party; are we not!!! I will not forget to get the addresses of all those boys whom I want to invite. I think there will be about a dozen.” A party did not seem to be in the cards, however, since on November 15th he wrote, “I am looking forward to a visit from you on that day.” His passion for She either sated or abandoned, he wrote “I should rather like ‘Gen Grant’s History of the American War’ (Illustrated).”

Winston was anticipating Christmas at home with his parents and brother when he learned from his headmistress Miss Thomson that Lord and Lady Randolph were leaving on a trip to Russia on December 19th. He wrote to his mother: “I am very disappointed at hearing that I must spend my holidays without you. But I am trying to make the ‘Best of a bad job’...I shall see you on Saturday and I have no doubt you will try your best to make me happy.”

100 YEARS AGO
Autumn 1912 • Age 37
“...find you an appropriate leaf”

Churchill was defending his naval expenditure estimates to Lloyd George, chancellor of the Exchequer, and involved in a contentious episode with the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Francis Bridgeman, whom he wanted to replace with the Second Sea Lord, Prince Louis of Battenberg.

Bridgeman, a notorious gossip, had shown disloyalty to his chief almost from the moment Churchill appointed him to replace Sir Arthur Wilson, who had resigned after refusing to support Churchill’s plan for a Naval War Staff. Bridgeman subsequently met with Conservative leader Arthur Balfour’s secretary, J.S. Sandars, criticizing Churchill and the manner in which he had replaced Wilson. Churchill’s letter to Wilson seeking his resignation, Bridgeman said, was “a fine example of what a letter ought not to be under such circumstances.” Sandars reported this to Balfour, saying Bridgeman characterized WSC as “exhibit[ing] great irritability and bad temper” and “break[ing] into tears and talk[ing] in such a melancholy manner about himself that Bridgeman thinks he must be ill.”

Bridgeman was himself ill, with bronchitis and appendicitis, so Churchill’s retirement request had a medical aspect. When Churchill wrote to the King, advising that he proposed to promote Battenberg in Bridgeman’s place, the King approved but Bridgeman manifestly did not wish to retire. A series of letters between Bridgeman and Churchill became more contentious after a 14 December Morning Post article had criticized Churchill with information that could only have originated with Bridgeman, or those in whom he had confided. Churchill called the Admiral to task in a letter Bridgeman said had a “threatening character.” After unsuccessfully seeking the King’s support, Bridgeman backed down and agreed a joint statement with Churchill repudiating the Morning Post.

Churchill’s troubles at this time extended to his wrong-footed attempt to name a new battleship after Oliver Cromwell. The King was adamantly opposed, ostensibly on political grounds, i.e., Irish sensibilities; but Churchill was surprisingly persistent, given his continuing role as the Liberals’
chief spokesman on Ireland. Three times he wrote to the King trying to persuade him and even discussed it with the King personally. He wasn’t even above a little polite blackmail as, in the midst of the letter exchange over the name, he sent a separate letter pointing out what he considered to be the King’s extravagant expenditures on the royal yacht! Inadvertently, Churchill was providing ammunition for his enemies’ claim that he lacked judgment.

Churchill’s lack of inhibition in appearing naked is well known, thanks mostly to the bath episode involving FDR during Churchill’s 1941 visit to the White House. His family was aware of this trait much earlier, as evidenced by a 9 November letter from his cousin the Duke of Marlborough, announcing the premature Christmas present of a bathrobe: “I have been shocked at the manner in which you display your person when travelling to and from the bathroom, and I am making an effort to find you an appropriate leaf.”

75 YEARS AGO
Autumn 1937 • Age 62
“Alarming accounts...of the RAF”

Sir Martin Gilbert writes: “By the autumn of 1937 Churchill’s sources of information on defence had become widespread, regular and of high quality. One of these sources was Group-Captain Lachlan MacLean, who had been introduced by Wing-Commander Torr Anderson, one of Churchill’s sources.

For reasons which defy explanation even today, the Chamberlain government had honored a request by Luftwaffe General Erhard Milch for an inspection tour of the RAF. In MacLean’s words, Milch had previously reported on “the backward state of our air development.” But Field Marshal Werner von Blomberg had visited England early in 1937 and received a different impression. Now Milch wished to verify his earlier impressions.

MacLean wrote to Anderson before Milch’s arrival: “How we have been let in for this visitation at the present moment is beyond imagination….Everyone must realize that the impression created on these people now must inevitably influence German policy with regard to us and foreign policy generally.”

MacLean attached to his letter notes from a conference that day at Bomber Command, with an ominous observation: “The Chairman opened the proceedings by saying that we should have to combat the country in order to produce sufficient aircraft to put up any sort of show.” MacLean added: “...we are bluffing with the sky as the limit without holding a single card and we have then invited our opponents to come round and see what cards we hold, trusting a sleight of hand to put across a second bluff. We know that Milch heads the group which suspects the real state of affairs and that the mission is to find confirmation of their suspicions.”

Anderson passed MacLean’s notes to Churchill who in turn sent them to Sir Maurice Hankey, Secretary of the Committee on Imperial Defence, who believed shared his concerns. He asked Hankey not to probe its origin, saying it was “one small installment of the alarming accounts I have received of the RAF.”

Hankey replied with an eight page letter more concerned with Churchill’s sources than the RAF’s unpreparedness: “It shocks me not a little that high Officers in disciplined forces should be in direct communication with a leading Statesman who...is regarded as a critic of the Departments under whom these Officers serve...I feel in my bones that these unofficial communications are all wrong, that the thing is infectious, and subversive to discipline and that the damage done to the Services far outweighs any advantages that may accrue....”

Churchill replied: “I certainly did not expect to receive from you a lengthy lecture when I went out of my way to give you, in strict confidence, information in the public interest...[Y]ou may be sure I shall not trouble you again in such matters.”

The German mission duly fulfilled its objective, proving Milch right in his analysis of RAF inferiority, as MacLean wrote in a detailed account which made its way to Churchill: “Wherever the [German] Mission went the standard equipment was of the biplane type... (including) the DH 86 in which they themselves were transported [and] must have shown clearly that we were still in the biplane era with all that implies.”

50 YEARS AGO
Autumn 1962 • Age 87
“The message shines through”

Churchill was recovering from surgery to mend his broken hip. On 15 October, his private secretary, Anthony Montague Browne, wrote to Lord Beaverbrook that Sir Winston was “in very good spirits” and was “in many ways intellectually better than before his accident, but his mobility is not increasing and he is very bored.” To alleviate boredom Churchill attended Other Club dinners on both 1 November and 6 December, on the latter occasion braving what Roy Howells called “the worst smog of the year.” With the bad weather only eleven members attended, Churchill being the second to arrive. Howells thought his boss had made “a most remarkable recovery.”

Mary Soames, in her collection of her parents’ letters, also calls her father’s recovery remarkable, but she goes on to add, “...it marked a definite further stage in his slow decline. A sad remaining witness to this are his letters: from 1961; his handwriting at times is noticeably less confident—and there are fewer and shorter letters—but after breaking his hip Winston’s handwriting became very wandery. The short notes are full of affection and concern, if occasionally muddled—but the message shines through.”
I have been asked to discuss the impact on markets and the economy of the Anglo-American relationship, no easy chore. Fortunately, I have been allotted only twenty minutes, so I can use imposed brevity as an excuse for superficiality.

Let me open with a warning: You have thus far been treated to reports by persons who can claim to have been at the events on which they are commenting; and by distinguished historians who have spent lifetimes analysing the life and times of Winston Churchill, mostly from a British point of view. I can make no such claim: I am here only because the planners of this event seem to have decided that an American economist might provide a nice balance to the real experts on this program; provide a piñata for those more familiar than I with the historical sources residing in the marvellous Churchill Archives Centre at Cambridge, in which my wife spent so many happy and productive hours; and offer living proof that any special relationship that exists can be preserved only if the British overlook our educational failings, sentimental biases, and horrible accents. I refuse to be intimidated. So here goes.

This relationship has been neither uniformly productive nor consistently congenial. I won’t start with the British funding of the American railroad system: there was nothing special about that, since restless British capital funded a good part of many nations’ infrastructures.

Start instead with the man who made the phrase “Special Relationship” famous, Winston Spencer Churchill, and American cooperation with him in his early foray into economic policy.

The assurances of the United States were important to then-Chancellor of the Exchequer Winston Churchill when he decided in 1925 to return Britain to the Gold Standard, a decision John Kenneth Galbraith, writing in 1975, called “perhaps the most decisively damaging action involving money in modern times,”¹ John Maynard Keynes called “a silly thing,” and Churchill himself later called his greatest mistake.² (See “Churchillnomics” articles in Finest Hour 154. —Ed.)

Whether Churchill would have gone forward with this move without U.S. support we do not know. He did after all have the backing of virtually Britain’s entire financial class, and did see the move as part of an effort to recreate the world he cherished as it existed before the Great War. “No responsible authority has advocated any other policy,” the Chancellor said, I assume meaning that Keynes, who had tried to talk him out of the move, was neither responsible, nor an authority—a position newly fashionable in some ill-advised circles in my country.

Dr. Stelzer is an American economist living in London and Washington, D.C. He is U.S. economic and business columnist for The Sunday Times, and Director of Economic Policy Studies at the Hudson Institute, as well as a contributing editor at The Weekly Standard. He is a consultant on market strategy, pricing and regulatory issues for United States and United Kingdom industries.
Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, writing to King George V, was unstinting in his praise of Churchill’s budget speech:

He soared into emotional flights of rhetoric in which he has few equals; and throughout the speech he showed that he is not only possessed of consummate ability as a parliamentarian, but also the versatility of an actor.

Perhaps “unstinting” is the wrong word, for Mr. Baldwin added:

In the case of such a masterly performance criticism would seem to be superfluous and almost unfair…but perhaps it might be said that the speech would have been even more effective if Mr. Churchill had been able to limit its length….The Opposition…tend to be more impressed with quiet sincerity than impassioned declamation.

Churchill told the House that he was comforted by the fact that the Federal Reserve Bank of New York had pledged $200 million to support the return to gold at $4.87 an ounce, and J.P. Morgan another $100 million. We also know that Churchill had discreetly accumulated $166 million to cover payments due that year on loans from the U.S., a creditor that wanted to be repaid—a fact apparently forgotten two decades later when poor John Maynard Keynes was dispatched to negotiate a postwar gift or generous loan from an ungenerous America.

So this early example of the Special Relationship in the area of finance was indeed productive: It helped to produce the Great Depression! The pound was overvalued by some 10%, putting downward pressure on wages, especially in the inefficient coal industry, producing the General Strike in 1926. Along with bursting the stock market bubble in the United States, and some rather misbegotten American fiscal, monetary and trade policies, it set the stage for the rise of dictatorships in Europe.

I exaggerate—but not by a lot. The resulting conflagration was precursor to “Destroyers for Bases”—the next episode in the financial relationship between our countries, on 2 September 1940.

Since this was a barter transaction, and I can figure out neither the value of fifty old destroyers nor ninety-nine-year land rights at no rent in various British possessions, I must rely on Churchill’s private secretary. Jock Colville estimated that this deal was so one-sided in favor of the United States that it compared with the relation of the Soviet Union to Finland.

That might be unduly harsh because, in addition to receiving the mothballed vessels, Churchill estab-

lished the principle of American involvement as an arms supplier to Britain—of America becoming the eventual “Arsenal of Democracy,” as President Roosevelt described it in a 1940 radio address.

We move on now to the consequential and often fraught relations between our countries during and after World War II, so thoroughly and wonderfully chronicled by Robert Skidelsky, and therefore needing no repeating here.

My country generously lent money to Britain when it could not be certain it would be repaid, then advanced a loan on terms that many took to be onerous, but that Keynes argued “represented not an assertion of American power but a reasonable compromise between the two great nations with the same goal: to restore a liberal world economy.”

Our countries’ next transaction was the Marshall Plan, which directed $2.7 billion to Britain to help finance its dollar deficits in 1948-51. It was “like a lifeline to sinking men” said Ernie Bevin—“the most generous act in history,” according to Churchill. Enough said.

Let me skip ahead to more recent times, and the financial crisis following the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008. Then-Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson was desperately trying to put together a private-sector deal to save Lehman. He had spoken with Bob Diamond and John Varley at Barclays, and been told that they were interested in buying Lehman if certain troubled assets could be excluded from the deal.

Paulson persuaded a group of Wall Street firms to put together a consortium to do just that, and went to bed “modestly optimistic about our chances of saving Lehman.” The Special Financial Relationship between America and Britain, one that permitted deals to get done over the telephone because of a fund of mutual trust and because years of doing deals together, could be drawn on.

But Paulson had not reckoned with the language differences between our two countries. British understatement that allows a downpour to be called “a spot of rain” had misled him. “I had not caught the true meaning when [Alistair Darling] expressed concern about a British bank buying Lehman. What I had taken as understandable caution should have been taken as a clear warning.”

In the event, with a deal clearly in sight, Paulson was told that the Financial Services Authority—a quasi-judicial body responsible for the regulation of the financial services industry in the UK—had declined to approve the deal, and that only the >>
Financial Aspects of the Special Relationship...

Chancellor of the Exchequer could waive the listing requirements that were troubling the FSA. Which, despite the willingness of U.S. banks to put $30 billion into the deal, the Chancellor declined to do “without a hint of apology in his voice…. He offered no specifics…. We would get no help from the British….19” It was hardly proof that a Special Relationship extended at that moment to fraught financial transactions.

It is interesting to compare Paulson’s description of what he clearly believed was less than direct dealing by the British authorities with Gordon Brown’s cryptic, self-exculpating description: “By late Sunday, September 14, it was clear that both the Bank of America and Barclays were pulling out of any rescue operation.”20 There was no hint here that Barclays was forced out of the deal by Gordon Brown’s Chancellor of the Exchequer, or any sense of responsibility for the subsequent fallout.

Which brings us to today, when the interests of America and Britain coincide.

Both need the Eurozone to take the steps everyone knows are required to calm markets: bank recapitalization, conversion of a monetary union into a transfer union, German—oops, EU—supervision of individual countries’ fiscal policy. So Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner and Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne are one voice urging the Eurozone to take the necessary steps.

But since neither America nor Great Britain is a member of the Eurozone, not even calls from President Obama and preachings from Prime Minister Cameron had much effect. It took a massive political push by Chancellor Merkel to get a bailout plan in place—the details of which are still being developed.

What does all of this mean, as we wonder whether any Special Relationship that might exist—which it is now fashionable to deny—extends to financial matters? We live in a time in which my President declined to retain a bust of Winston Churchill in the Oval Office, and your Prime Minister pulled troops out of Basra, enormously increasing the burden borne by the U.S. in Iraq; a time in which my President decided to help you in the Libyan adventure by “leading from behind,” and in which your Prime Minister decided to ignore American pleas not to cut so violently into Britain’s military capability. There’s more, but you get the idea: We don’t always get along!

But I would argue that when it comes to financial relationships we more or less do get along. Despite some lapses, several of which I have detailed herein:

• America joins Britain in the battle to keep trade free and open.
• Both our countries reflect similar (and in my view mistaken) values by continuing to fund aid programmes despite the fact that both our countries are running unsustainable deficits of around 10% of their Gross Domestic Products.
• America and Britain are alike in urging the powers—that-be in the Eurozone to fix their banks, and impose on them capital requirements sufficient to ensure their viability.
• Both of our countries are resisting the attempts of the European Union to impose undue restrictions on trading in securities.
• French politicians are correct in accusing both of our countries—the Anglo-Saxons—of believing in properly regulated markets, rather than in massive state intervention, although the expansion of government under the present administration in my country, and the interventionist policies of at least one arm of the coalition government in yours must be winning approval in Paris.

All of which is rather “special,” but less important when it comes to economic policy than the intellectual interaction of our countries’ great economists. Three of your greatest economists provided the pillars on which our macroeconomic and macroeconomic policies rest:

• Adam Smith gave us a nuanced moral and economic basis for free markets and free trade, for the idea that competition policy is the key to allowing consumers to benefit from the self-interested search for profits, and for the notion that taxes should be limited to those needed to support the vital functions of government, and collected without need for a huge bureaucracy. Those precepts remain the basis for our macroeconomic policies, despite some lapses.
• Walter Bagehot provided lessons in monetary policy that still guide our Federal Reserve chairmen. In a crisis, it is the role of central banks to provide liquidity in the amounts necessary to support the financial system. Better than bailouts. That remains the key ingredient of our monetary policy; although Bagehot’s call for appropriate charges is not always heeded.
• John Maynard Keynes added some wisdom about fiscal policy, and his strictures still dominate macroeconomic policymaking, overtly in the case of what we call liberals, less overtly in the case of conservatives who feel they must deny Keynes while at the same time voting for tax policies that increase
deficits during recessions. The administration and several leading American Nobel laureates insist that the path out of our present difficulties has been mapped out in their dog-eared copies of The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money. They view austerity as a path to another recession, or worse, citing the malign effects of the programs imposed on Greece and other Eurozone supplicants. They are joined by the Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer in urging new programs of demand stimulation, or at least a halt in spending cuts and de-leveraging until our economies are strengthened.

I think it fair to say that John Maynard Keynes’s impact on American economic policy in the post-World War II era has been every bit as great as was his sometime friend Winston Churchill’s impact on American foreign and military policy during the war. And probably more enduring. (See “H.W. Arndt, “The Wizard and the Pragmatist: Keynes and Churchill, FH 153:20-25.)

The influence of Smith, Bagehot and Keynes has been reciprocated; Americans have contributed to thinking in Britain. Milton Friedman and others are drawn on by British policymakers who argue with some force that Keynes had it wrong—that government efforts to manage demand are doomed to failure, that monetary rather than fiscal policy should be the politicians’ first port of call, and—most important—that personal freedom is inextricably linked with free markets.

We provided a home for the great Joseph Schumpeter as he developed his theories on the role of entrepreneurs and the creative destruction they wreak in creating dynamic, innovative economies, a vision that British politicians are desperately seeking to make flesh. And we added to the knowledge in both our countries of techniques for quantifying and testing economic theories, for considering what real people do under real conditions, and how their expectations affect policy initiatives.

This is not the place to resolve the dispute between Keynes and his critics, if in fact it can ever be resolved, and I am certainly not competent to do so. Indeed, since Keynes was extraordinarily practical, and willing to change his mind when the facts changed, I can’t help wondering what he might have recommended in a period in which weak economic activity coincides with outsize and unsustainable budget deficits. Would he have said, “Damn the deficits, full speed ahead, run those printing presses,” which is the position of some of his acolytes? I wonder.

There you have it—the ramblings of an economist so conflicted that he admires Keynes and many of his critics, who believes that in the financial sphere at least our countries do have a Special Relationship, often fraught, and often wrongheaded.

Doubt that and do this thought experiment: From all the countries in the world, pick any one that is more closely in tune with Britain or America when it comes to the structure of our economies and the goal of economic policy than we are with each other. Putin’s Russia? China’s centrally controlled economy? France, with its aversion to markets? Argentina, with its embrace of inflation? Japan, with its refusal to get its banking system in order? Greece and Italy with their rigid labor markets?

Our countries might disagree on some issues, even important ones. We might go through periods of strain, but we remain shoulder-to-shoulder in support of market capitalism, regulated so as to preserve vigorous private sectors while restraining their excesses, and confident that in the future we will continue to have a special relationship that allows us to sharpen our economic-policy tools.

Endnotes

6. Ibid., 445.
9. Ibid.
The death of Simon Ward (Datelines, page 7), who played its title role, is an appropriate time for a retrospective look at the film version of My Early Life. Young Winston depicts a wide-eyed, perhaps insecure Churchill in the toils of youth, with no hints of future glory. In fact, some might see him as a troublesome youth who desperately and vainly seeks his father’s acceptance.

“Politics? How do I get there?,” wonders Lieutenant Churchill, fighting in Queen Victoria’s Little Wars. Amid the whine of bullets, Ward’s voiceover suggests a youth seeking not heroic deeds but acts that will lead to political advancement. Based on Churchill’s autobiography (with considerable license from then-popular myths) the film shows him as a precocious schoolboy, a soldier, a war correspondent, and a Member of Parliament at age 26.

Ward’s Churchill is “considerably discouraged by my school days.” Born to aristocracy, but neglected by his father (played by Robert Shaw) and at times an indifferent mother (Anne Bancroft), his education was not to his liking. In his first school he suffers physical and psychological abuse by a tyrannical head master (Robert Hardy, later himself a masterful Churchill in The Wilderness Years). At Harrow, his formidable public school, he is repelled by rote learning of the classics, but this discipline later leads him to his own self-education, as Cambridge historian Alan Watson wrote, “drawing the strength out of these books [he read].”

Winston’s father routinely badgers him, believing him ill-suited for politics and, really, most other things. But Churchill loves his father dearly, hoping always to earn his approval. His vulnerability is portrayed strikingly by Simon Ward. Their relationship is strained and a bit Freudian, in that Winston is denied approval and love. Ultimately, he is devastated watching his father’s deterioration and death at 46. (The film regurgitates the canard, long since disproved, that Lord Randolph died of syphilis.) In one moving scene, Winston watches his idol, the onetime Leader of the House of Commons, unable to finish a speech, being helped away by a colleague. Winston becomes convinced that he too will die young—a factor that motivates him. “He always wanted to be where the action was,” his granddaughter Celia Sandys said.

Mr. Feldschreiber is a journalist and writer specializing in ambassadors, officials and dissidents. He saw the film as part of this past summer’s Morgan Library & Museum exhibition “Churchill: The Power of Words,” (FH 155:36).

Far left: “I think I will write an autobiography. I think I will have something to write about.” Simon Ward was impressive as the youthful Churchill. Left: Equally stunning was Anne Bancroft as Lady Randolph Churchill, seated here with director Richard Attenborough; and Robert Shaw (Lord Randolph)—younger readers may recognize Shaw as “Quint,” the crusty shark-hunter in Jaws.
The filmic style of *Young Winston* is often non-linear, centering on the
dozens-odd years between schooldays,
adventures as soldier and war correspon-
dent, and early years in Parliament. In
the beginning we see a solitary boy lost
within a large estate, then sent to
schools which greet him with a con-
tinuum of disapproval (historically
overemphasized; some of his teachers,
and Harrow Head Master Welldon, had
high hopes for him).

On two occasions the film stages a
running dialogue between an unseen
reporter and Lady Randolph, and with
her son. In almost BBC-style, the
reporter talks with Jennie after
Randolph’s death. When she states her
adoration of the father and son the
reporter scoffs, focusing on what he sees
as her apathy to both, leaving her
shocked and angry. This scene is based
too heavily on popular notions rather
than facts; Jennie’s own diaries and
letters revealed her grief over her
husband, and her deep interest in her
two sons, even as boys.

The unseen reporter later talks to
young Winston about his political ambi-
tions, after years of war reporting. “I did
kill, and people shot at me,” Churchill
recalls. The interview shifts to pointed
questions about his troubled
upbringing. Speaking in his father’s
magnificent study, Churchill stresses the
importance of young people in govern-
ment. The reporter, obviously doubtful,
asks: “You were not so well acquainted
with your father?” Winston manfully
defends himself—and Lord Randolph.

A sequel in English versions of the
film is a scene from Churchill’s 1947
short-story *The Dream*, in which he
meets the ghost of his father—who still
fails to learn what he has accomplished.

If the film meant to emphasize the
need for youth in government, it makes
its point with Churchill as its model.
“Politics was his profession, writing was
his passion,” wrote Peter Clarke.

Despite its wandering at times from
the facts, “Young Winston” is a pleasure
to watch, because of the acting by Ward,
Shaw, Bancroft and Hardy; and
Anthony Hopkins as Lloyd George, the
Liberal lion, Parliamentary luminary
and notorious lecher. “He has the most
disconcerting way of looking at
women,” Bancroft remarks.

The film also fascinates because we
know of Churchill’s destiny. We find
ourselves scouring Ward for insights into
his character, searching for the Church-
ill we know from his greatest years, urging
him on as he struggles through a diffi-
cult adolescence. (Reminding us of
glories to come, Attenborough inserts
newsreel footage of his finest hours.)

Ultimately, *Young Winston* is an
adventure story, of a brash and mischie-
vous, privileged boy, possessed of
remarkable gifts, overcoming many chal-
lenges. More than a film on the travails
of youth, it shows us how Sir Winston
Churchill emerged as a man—and
always in a hurry. A Boer War compa-
triot asks at the end: “Winston, don’t
you ever relax?” “I can’t!” he replies,
“I’m almost 25!”

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**THEATRE**

**Churchill at Bay: A Reading**

**FRED GLUECKSTEIN**

On July 9th, the Beckett Theatre
in Manhattan was filled for a
reading of *Churchill at Bay*,
presented to complement the summer-
long exhibit, “Churchill: The Power of
Words,” at the Morgan Library.

The play’s principal characters include
Prime Minister Winston Churchill,
Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax,
Lord President of the Council Neville
Chamberlain, Deputy Prime Minister
Clement Attlee and Minister without
Portfolio Arthur Greenwood, who
together made up the coalition War
Cabinet. Other historical personages are
the Italian Ambassador to Britain
Giuseppe Bastianni, Churchill’s liaison
with the Chiefs of Staff General
Hastings Ismay, French Premier Paul
Reynaud and Churchill’s private secre-
tary John Martin. Fictionalized soldiers
at Dunkirk include a French major, an
English captain and privates Thompson
and Brown of the British Expeditionary
Force (BEF) who, separated from their
units, are trying to reach the coast.

The script, inspired by John Lukacs’
*Five Days in London, May 1940* (Yale
University Press, 1999), follows the War
Cabinet’s historic debate when Lord

Halifax, apparently supported by
Chamberlain, wants to accept Bastianni’s
offer to have Mussolini intervene with
Hitler for a conference to end hostilities.
Doing so, Halifax believes, will forestall
an invasion of Britain and preserve her
independence. These are desperate times:
Germany has overrun Czechoslovakia,
Poland, Austria, Luxembourg and
Holland, and the War Cabinet has been
informed that Belgium has capitulated,
with France on the verge.

Churchill, prime minister for scarcely
a fortnight and not popular in his own
Conservative Party, is faced with
agreeing to the Halifax proposal or
 opting to fight on, in all likelihood
alone, except for the Empire and
Commonwealth. Churchill suspects that
this might cause Halifax to resign, and
perhaps Chamberlain, resulting in the
fall of his government. The play portrays
Churchill’s momentous political decision
to fight on, come what may.

While the play is by and large histori-
ically accurate, it takes some liberties
with fact. For example, Churchill, in an
effort to deflect Halifax, decides to brief
the larger Cabinet on events. The
Cabinet opposes any negotiations, WSC
returns to the War Cabinet with this >>

Mr. Glueckstein is a New York writer and fre-
quent *Finest Hour* contributor.
Churchill at Bay...

news, and asks each member to decide for himself. To the surprise of all, Chamberlain says he too believes that the time is not right to seek peace terms.

But a vote by the War Cabinet was not referenced in Lukacs’ book, or other accounts of this dramatic time. After meeting with the Cabinet, Churchill did return to the War Cabinet for a brief discussion—but only of Reynaud’s proposed appeal to Roosevelt (which Churchill thought premature). As Lukacs wrote: “That was the end of it. He had worn Halifax down.”

The portrayal of Churchill is disconcerting. He seems at times disoriented, confusing, for example, Ismay’s report on Dunkirk with the Norway operations. Later he asks what the situation is in Gallipoli, an allusion to the failed operation of World War I, and a map Churchill and Ismay are studying turns into a map of Gallipoli. Over operations in Norway, Churchill is haunted by his “Black Dog” (FH 155:28): “Go away, you brute, go away. Leave my sight.” John Martin walks in and Churchill asks his private secretary “Are you black?” This is dialogue built on mythology.

The play’s Churchill is clearly subjected to poetic license to augment the drama. As a result, the audience receives a combination of accurate and inaccurate history, and a portrayal combining truth and fiction. These historical inaccuracies could easily have been avoided if the script had been vetted by a knowledgeable Churchill historian.

To its credit, the play was presented by fine actors: Brian Murray (Churchill), Richard Easton (Halifax) and Jim Murtaugh (Chamberlain). Producer Bob Crothers says the next phase en route to the New York stage will be regional theatre performances to raise the $3 million needed to finance the production. Wherever the play is seen, it would be better served if advertisements stress that it is a fictionalized account—or if the script makes a few adjustments needed to render it completely accurate. The drama of those days needs no augmentation.

Gilbert the Incomparable

DAVID FREEMAN

In addition to writing most of Churchill’s official biography and editing sixteen volumes of documents, Sir Martin Gilbert has produced numerous specialized Churchill studies, making him the undisputed king of the field. Each of his contributions is worth reading and re-reading. This review provided the opportunity to both.

Churchill: The Power of Words offers quite a new way to learn about Churchill: a guided tour through his life in the words of Churchill himself and conducted by his Boswell. Gilbert has selected 200 readings from Churchill’s books, articles, speeches and letters that highlight the main events and themes of an extraordinarily full and lengthy life. Arranged in chronological order, the readings tell Churchill’s life story in his own words, with each section placed in context by Gilbert’s brief introductions.

The result is a kind of autobiographical supplement to Churchill’s My Early Life. Although WSC wrote many volumes of memoirs and accounts of his adventures, he never produced a narrative covering his whole career. This book is the closest thing to such a work.

Churchill introduces the reader to his life in brief, beautifully written installments. Gilbert’s book makes an ideal gift for those new to the subject and old hands alike. In fact, the next time someone asks you why you are so interested in Churchill, hand him a copy of this book and say: “Read!”

Originally published more than thirty years ago as a companion to the homonymous television mini-series, The Wilderness Years deserves to be considered on its own merits. Many remember Robert Hardy’s brilliant performance in the title role, still the longest and best dramatization of any period of Churchill’s life. The book could easily have been a mere afterthought, but Gilbert is too good a historian to have rushed into print a book unworthy of himself or his subject.

When this work was first published, Gilbert had just produced the relevant Volume V of the Official Biography, along with the three massive companion volumes of documents that went with it. These lengthy works inform his story of Churchill’s time out of power during the decade preceding the Second World War. These were the Appeasement years, when Churchill was the lonely voice “crying in the wilderness” against the rising menace of Nazi Germany.

Eighty years on, the story is still shocking. Three successive prime ministers refused to take many necessary steps towards safeguarding the country against aggression, believing that rearrangement would only hasten war, not deter it.
Repeatedly Churchill was dismissed as a warmonger, yet he never flinched, never failed to try new initiatives, and had the satisfaction of seeing former opponents in all parties come round to reality, however belatedly, one by one.

Churchill wrote of these events himself in *The Gathering Storm*, the first volume of his World War II memoirs. But even after the war, WSC did not have all the facts: much still remained classified or hidden away in the private papers of former government ministers. With access to all of the relevant documents, Gilbert threads together the full story of the arrogance, foolishness and subterfuge against which Churchill had to struggle.

If you seek a thorough but accessible account of Appeasement and Churchill’s battle against it, without all of the scholarly trappings that can so easily confuse and bog down the general reader, *The Wilderness Years* is a perfect fit. It deserves to rank as one of the finest monographs in Churchill studies.

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**Quotes Churchill Really Said**

**Paul H. Courtenay**


Richard Langworth OEE (our esteemed editor) first published this book in 2008 with the title *Churchill By Himself*, with a second revised edition in 2010. After six months’ prodigious checking and re-checking every entry against original appearances (some of which disagree with each other!), it has been republished under a new title with a snappy and evocative cover. My only minor and constructive criticism is that one or two of the captions still require fine-tuning.

So far the book is available in the U.S. only online from Amazon UK, but an e-book will follow by the end of the year.

A key improvement is the new Key Word and Phrase Index, supplementing the main index and simplifying the location of your favourite quotations.

This new edition contains some newly-verified items, while deleting one well-known entry now proven bogus. Commendations by Lady Soames and Sir Martin Gilbert give it an authenticity which it would be impossible to challenge: it must surely be the Bible of Churchill quotation books. The general layout is unchanged, with thirty-four chapters covering such fields as Maxims, America, Germany, War, People, the two World Wars, Painting, Leadership, Army and Navy, “Churchillisms,” Britain, etc.

What makes this book especially valuable is that every one of the 4120 entries is backed by verifiable sources: no item is included unless it can be attributed. This is much more than can be said about other (much shorter) books of this kind, which seem to include every unattributed anecdote and bogus rumour under the sun. As before, there is an interesting appendix, “Red Herrings,” which records a number of “well-trod” Churchill sayings which are either inventions or cannot be attributed. OEE regrets that he didn’t have space to insert the Shaw Red Herring, which he has expunged from the main body of the book. This was the amusing exchange of messages in which Bernard Shaw is stated to have sent WSC two tickets to the opening night of his new play, adding “Bring a friend—if you have one.” Churchill is supposed to have responded “I cannot come on the first night, but shall come on the second night—if there is one.” (See FH 152:7, where Allen Packwood of the Churchill Archives Centre, reveals a pair of letters showing that each of the two men denied that he had ever made the alleged remark.)

As it happens, while writing footnotes for James W. Muller’s new edition of Churchill’s *Great Contemporaries* (FH 155:53), I had reached the point in Churchill’s essay on Shaw in which he refers to the play *Saint Joan*, when I heard of Allen’s discovery. I had been on the point of writing a note including this very tale, when I was surprised to learn that it was untrue. Kay Halle (*Irrepressible Churchill*) and Dalton Newfield (FH’s 1970-75 editor) had been deceived. Out it came, just in time! Churchillians will always want to be able to avoid a faux-pas of this kind, so—even if you own one of the earlier editions—you would do well to obtain this new version, which is not expensive to order online, even by airmail.

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*Churchill on Book Writing from Churchill in His Own Words*

“‘To sit at one’s table on a sunny morning, with four clear hours of uninterrupted security, plenty of nice white paper...that is true happiness.’

“Writing a book...built an impenetrable crystal sphere around one of interests and ideas...one felt like a goldfish in a bowl; but in this case the goldfish made his own bowl.”

“Writing a long and substantial book is like having a friend and companion at your side, to whom you can always turn for comfort....”

“Writing a book is an adventure. To begin with it is a toy, then an amusement. Then it becomes a mistress, and then it becomes a master, and then it becomes a tyrant and, in the last stage, just as you are about to be reconciled to your servitude, you kill the monster and fling him to the public.”
A Little Gem
ERICA L. CHENOWETH

Winston Churchill, by Kevin Theakston. Softbound, illus., 56 pp., $12.95, members $11.

In the opening of his autobiography, Edward Gibbon, the historian admired by Churchill and his father, writes: “...the public are always curious to know the men who have left behind them any image of their minds.” WSC left behind a uniquely prolific and wide-ranging series of images for curious minds to examine.

In contrast to his first Churchill work, Winston Churchill and the British Constitution (FH 124), Kevin Theakston, Professor of British Government at Leeds University, now presents a short biography of a great man in politics, accurately covering a good deal of ground in a very short space.

Theakston guides the reader through Churchill’s life at a crisp clip and ever-quickening pace, without editorializing or repeating erroneous myths or quotations. He divides the book into five sections: the first focuses on WSC’s early life and the other four trace the arc of Churchill’s active political and private life until his death in January 1965.

When Theakston does editorialize, the reader may take his insinuations in stride, beg to differ or resolve to investigate the topic in greater depth, and move on. In such a short book, the need for further discussion of many topics is inevitable, but Theakston’s brief treatise kindles a desire to learn more.

The first section catalogues well-known highlights of Churchill’s bustling youth: a clear delineation of the events from 1895 to 1901 smoothly launches the reader into the later sections, focusing on his political life. There Theakston enters into his element, and the reader feels comfortable in his capable hands. The statesman’s non-political activities are noted: “Churchill crammed much else besides politics into his life in these years” (21). But in following the ebb and flow of Churchill’s political life, the reader gets a sense of an author satisfactorily reviewing its cuts and facets as a lapidary would a gem.

In a compact discussion of WSC’s literary achievements, Theakston mentions his two books of essays, Great Contemporaries and Thoughts and Adventures, without explaining that Churchill revised each previously printed article, missing an opportunity to tell us what an “indefatigable reviser” he was. Careful crafting of words was as important to his published works as it was to his speeches.

Theakston’s inclusion of historical photographs, from such sources as the online photo archives of the Daily Mirror and the Mary Evans Picture Library, is an important supplement to his brief discourse. He offers family photos, famous self-portraits, a pleasing sketch of Harrow School, Punch cartoons, a two-page color spread of Cartwell, and newspaper images from the Daily Mirror and The Sphere, printed in such high resolution that the reader can practically read every word.

There is nothing sentimental in the seven-page dash to the finish in the final section on Churchill as an elder statesman. The middle sections of the book shine more brightly. The concluding appendices, “Further Reading” and “Places to Visit Associated with Churchill,” encourage the reader to discover more. While no book so short can chisel a very large place on one’s bookshelf, it can nick into a small yet comfortable seat, as a stimulating, if speedy, introduction to the life and times of Winston S. Churchill. 🖼

A Great Deal of Substance and a Certain Amount of Spin
WILLIAM JOHN SHEPHERD

Professor Quaunt has written widely on British politics and leaders, with sympathetic studies of Gladstone and Churchill. Here he examines the role of democracy in the governments of ten prominent prime ministers since the mid-19th century: five Tories (Disraeli, Salisbury, Baldwin, Churchill, Thatcher); two Liberals (Gladstone, Lloyd George); and three Labourites (MacDonald, Attlee, Blair).

Quaunt says he selected premiers who had served at least five years and made significant contributions “to the evolution of modern British politics” (2).
However, notable long-serving prime ministers such as Asquith, Macmillan, Wilson and Major are virtually ignored—Asquith most remarkably, given the major reforms of his Liberal governments. The ones the author does cover receive impressively long chapters and a tour de force analysis of their respective concepts of democracy. While most of them were influenced by the classic philosophers, Quinault explains, they were also affected by contemporary ideas produced by an expanding electorate. Topics range from “Tory Democracy” and proportional representation to legislative actions enfranchising women and ending plural voting rights for landowners and universities.

Quinault’s ultimate thesis gradually emerges through his use of the democratic credentials of the nine premiers, Disraeli to Thatcher, as a foil for a blistering attack on the tenth, Tony Blair. The last, he argues, was all spin and no substance, a non-intellectual whose achievements in the Northern Ireland Peace Agreement of 1998 and partial reform of the House of Lords were more than offset by his autocratic rule at home and bloody wars abroad. Blair is accused of subservience to President George W. Bush as they attempted to impose democracy on Iraq and Afghanistan, while ignoring the tyrannical aspects of friendly regimes elsewhere. Blair “took the name of democracy in vain and, by so doing, he devalued both his own reputation and that of democratic government” (220).

If only the array of unpalatable choices faced by modern leaders were always between right and wrong, rather than a variety of imperfect alternatives.

The chapter on Churchill (recycled from a 2001 article in the Transactions of the Royal Historical Society) contains minor errors: Churchill’s novel Savrola was published in 1899, not 1896 (144), his post-Great War ministries included Secretary of State for Air, not just War (143). Given the Blair attack, one wonders how the chapter on Thatcher could fail to condemn her similarly for her association with Ronald Reagan, with whom she famously cooperated over democracy movements in Eastern Europe while disagreeing over American actions in Grenada and, initially, toward the Falkland Islands. Although the book has excellent endnotes, there are no photographs or bibliography and the index is weak, with many listings for several individuals, and no entries for the major issues covered in the text, such as proportional representation and plural voting.

Quinault’s book is a useful overview of modern British political leadership despite the anti-Blair diatribe and minor errors and omissions. Its exorbitant price tag seems designed to force readers into the inexpensive Kindle edition.

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Tall Tiger’s Tale

CHRISTOPHER H. STERLING

**Catch That Tiger: Churchill’s Secret Order That Launched the Most Astounding and Dangerous Mission of World War II**, by Noel Botham and Bruce Montague. John Blake, hardbound, illus., 228 pp., $24.95, members $19.95.

The authors of this breathless book admit that “all of the principal characters were real people,” but “some of the minor characters have been amalgamated for the sake of clarity. Intimate conversations are of a speculative nature.” Books with invented dialogue always give me pause—what’s real and what isn’t? But amalgamated characters? That’s a new one. (Or maybe not quite new.) Is this fact or fiction?

The subtitle should give pause. After all, how many “astounding and dangerous missions” were there from 1939 to 1945? And who says this one was “the most”? My concerns were thus aroused even before I read about Albert “Speer” (4)—his name was “Speer.” I’ll spare you more of this—and more there is.

The premise is that Churchill sent the book’s hero, engineer Major Douglas Lidderdale, to North Africa to capture one of the new German “Tiger” heavy tanks. Well-armed and armored, Tigers were knocking out lighter British and American tanks in battle. The authors claim Churchill personally told Lidderdale to “catch that Tiger”: to bring it back for study and then display it on Horse Guards Parade in central London. They also claim Churchill (and George VI as well) made a special trip to see the captured specimen in May 1943. Martin Gilbert gives this tale exactly one clause in a single sentence in *Road to Victory* (424), making clear that seeing the tank was but one element of a longer trip by Churchill.

The Tiger’s capture was (apparently) dramatic, but the weeks and months taken to get it moved from Tunisia to Britain suggest the mission’s priority wasn’t quite so high as intimated here.

Any book lacking an index or any documentation (save the Lidderdale diary—he died in 1999) is not a serious study. Indeed, this one reads more like a prospective “derring-do” film script. The people—real or amalgamated—come across as comic strip characters, not as serious men in dangerous times. Even the print is larger than normal, implausibly for “easy reading,” more likely to fill more pages. Save your money,
Backhanded Compliment

RICHARD M. LANGWORTH

The Treasures of Winston Churchill: The Greatest Briton, by Christopher Catherwood. Andrew Deutsch, hardbound in slipcase, 96 pp. illus. with photos and reproduced documents, £30, £19.50 from Amazon UK.

The author’s three previous Churchill volumes accuse the “Greatest Briton” of ensuring endless strife in Iraq, communizing Eastern Europe by preventing a 1943 Second Front, and being a depressed, alcohol-dependent “flawed genius.” So it’s startling to see his byline on what is outwardly a coffee-table tribute sponsored by Churchill Heritage Ltd. Is this his apologia, then? Yes and no.

Some readers, if they can read the small type, will find this a dandy tribute, and it is indeed nicely produced: a big, square book full of familiar photos, and four pockets containing reproduction documents. Those who read it carefully may consider otherwise.

Some of the selected reproductions are oddly insignificant: a school report, love letters between Churchill and Clementine, and Churchill and Roosevelt; a bricklayer union card; a post-D-Day travel permit, election souvenirs. Two are profound: his 1916 letter for his wife to open in the event of his death, and a typescript page from his 1940 tribute to “The Few.”

Other desirable reproductions might include the page from young Winston’s Harrow essay predicting a future war remarkably like World War I; his 1911 cabinet memo accurately predicting the opening of that war; his 1914 Admiralty order sending the Fleet to its war stations; his 1941 message to Roosevelt warning that Britain might fall, whatever he did; Roosevelt’s majestic “Sail on, O Ship of State” letter; the Queen’s letter on his retirement; his sad, revealing plaint to Eisenhower during the Suez Crisis; and so on.

The text is familiar in that Catherwood repeats all his previous charges. In Churchill’s time “mental illness was not understood.” In escaping from the Boers he abandoned his companions. Post-WW1 military spending cuts were made because Britain “was effectively bankrupt.” His support for Edward VIII “greatly harmed” his campaign for disarmament. Over a 1943 Second Front, Churchill’s antiquated notions of warfare thwarted those of Marshall and Eisenhower.

These are put conclusions based on faulty or partial evidence. Every one of them can be answered with the words “no” or “yes, but.” Germany’s invasion of Britain was “rendered impossible,” Catherwood writes, because of the damage inflicted on the German navy in Norway. (Yes, but...even a whole German navy could not have challenged the Royal Navy and the RAF)

Churchill’s Folly, Catherwood’s Iraq book, is reflected in “Winston’s Folly,” his chapter on Iraq. Churchill at the 1921 Cairo conference “decided how exactly the arrangement of the former Ottoman provinces would be drawn.” (No, some forty conferees participated, many of them pro-Arab.)

Jordan was “created by mistake.” (Yes, but...this particular Churchill Folly is still there—the most peaceful Arab state in the region.) As Yogi Berra might say, in the Middle East, one success out of two ain’t half bad.

Lawrence of Arabia’s hagiographer was Lowell Thomas, not “Lowell Shepperd.” Lawrence was “a showman,” and “it is said that much of his book, The Seven Pillars of Wisdom, bears little relation to his war reports.”

“It is said?” Why not do the research and find out? The use of such language reminds us of the words “possibly” and “perhaps” that bedizen the author’s previous book, amid the shopworn suppositions of Anthony Storr and Lord Moran about booze and the Black Dog.

I don’t suggest that the book is entirely unworthy. The author has checked his quotes and avoids common mistakes. He is right about his subject’s major mistakes (Dardanelles, India). His appreciations of Churchill as military innovator, as an artist, as a writer and orator, as the seeker of a lasting peace, are well drawn. His sidebars on Montgomery and Eden are brisk and accurate; so is the one on Lloyd George, except for an unexplained claim that government changes in 1916 “enabled Churchill to do so much in 1945.” The author rightly sees Churchill’s memoirs as demonstrating that the end of World War II “was a complete disaster for millions of central Europeans.” He says Churchill’s 1940 declaration for “victory at all costs” was “incontestably right.” His finale, “Churchill and History,” is fair if superficial.

But the reader is constantly distracted by biased sidebars and asides containing unsubstantiated conjecture.
Titanic: The Strange Verdict

MICHAEL RICHARDS


The author’s contentions, that Churchill, as a newly promoted President of the Board of Trade, was distracted from carefully reviewing the Titanic by political ambition, pursuit of his future wife and “wounded pride,” were covered in “Datelines” last issue (FH 155: 7-8). We cover here only the accompanying accusations, that Churchill was warned about the ship’s insufficient lifeboats, and failed to take action; and that he should have known (somehow) that corners were being cut (maybe) in Titanic’s construction.

Titanic’s lifeboat capacity (1178), though nearly 20% higher than the Board of Trade requirement (990), was vastly short of her total passengers and crew. But this had been the lifeboat situation for twenty years before Churchill arrived. Queried about lifeboats in Parliament before the tragedy, Churchill had replied: “I am advised that it would not be practicable” for liners to carry boats for all. This is no different from what his predecessors had been saying on the advice of their experts. What makes Churchill different?

The author argues that lifeboat quotas were purposely kept low by greedy ship-owners who “never wanted to pay for boats or for the men who could launch them” (20). He shows effectively how Thomas Ismay, the owner of White Star, “cooked” the minutes of an 1888 committee on lifeboats to delete references to lifesaving “appliances” for all aboard. “In fairness to Ismay,” he adds, the committee “probably never imagined” their regulations would still be in force two decades later.” But Churchill should have?

By 1908 the same greedy ship-owners were building elaborate watertight compartments controlled from the bridge, which cost a lot more than lifeboats, and which, they thought erroneously, would keep a liner afloat in any conceivable situation. (They would have, if Titanic had hit the iceberg at virtually any other angle.)

Churchill, we are told, should have divined that watertight compartments were not enough, that slicing her hull open for 200+ feet in a glancing blow would cause them to overflow, one into another, until a ship sank. That is really asking a lot of a government minister taking the advice of technical experts.

As for not wanting to pay for enough men to launch lifeboats, Titanic carried 900 crew—which proved more than enough to launch every boat in the davits, and then some. (Anticipating an increase in lifeboat regulations, the builders had provided Titanic with davits for double the number of boats, enough for everyone on board.)

The fact that many boats left the ship short of capacity, saving nearly 500 fewer lives than they might have, is something even Churchill could not foresee: at first, passengers hung back, preferring the “safety” of the ship to small boats on the open sea; later, officers sent boats away unfilled, believing they might buckle on the way down.

The author indict[s] many people besides Churchill—captain, crew, ship-owners, politicians, builders, steel suppliers, riveters, inspectors. He does make a powerful case that White Star, in its haste to build the ship, may have accepted poor quality steel and/or rivets. But he admits this theory is “controversial” and can only say with certainty that “the steel of 1912 was less resistant to stress than the steel of today.”

Yet Strange will keep Churchill in his crosshairs: “...it is hard to believe that the politician in charge of the Marine Division could not have been aware of the ship’s construction” (195). Really? “It would have been odd,” he adds, “if Churchill hadn’t talked to Lord Pirrie” of Harland & Wolff, Titanic’s builders. Why? Well, they were close enough to be “the main speakers at a Belfast rally in favour of Home Rule.” Which proves what, exactly?

This is a good book for Titanic aficionados, because Strange does offer interesting and challenging critiques of the ship’s construction, the Board of Trade’s long-outmoded lifeboat rules, and the actions of the ship’s owners and builders. But he has failed to prove that Churchill “bears a heavy burden of responsibility” for her loss. ☢
BOOK REVIEWS

Thin Gruel
DAVID STAFFORD


Many famous spy novelists have drawn on personal experience of intelligence to craft their fiction. Ian Fleming’s career in British naval intelligence during the Second World War furnished him with ample material for his James Bond novels; Graham Greene profited from his wartime spell with MI6 to produce Our Man in Havana; and without John Le Carre’s early stints with MI5 and MI6 the world would have been denied the pleasures of the legendary George Smiley, Tinker, Tailor, Soldier Spy, and the London Circus.

But with Dennis Wheatley, the subject of this e-book, it was the other way round—he was recruited for secret work only after, and largely because, he’d already created a bestselling fic-
tional secret agent. Named Gregory Sallust, a prototype James Bond, he was a debonair man about town who knew his wines and consistently outsmarted the diabolical and one-eyed head of the Gestapo’s foreign section, the sadistic SS Gruppenführer Grauber.

The first Sallust spy novel, The Scarlet Imposter, appeared early in 1940 and was rapidly followed by two more that year. By this time author Wheatley had also published numerous crime thrillers, as well as The Devil Rides Out, the famous occult novel for which he is still remembered today. On the eve of the war he was making the equivalent of a million pounds sterling a year.

Already in his forties, Wheatley was too old to serve in combat but desperate to help. Fortunately, his wife was able to assist. A driver for MI5, she introduced him to some well-placed contacts, and shortly after the collapse of France, he was officially asked to turn his novelist’s skills to imagining how the Nazis might invade Britain. The paper he produced was so effective in stimulating thinking about British counter-measures that he was commissioned to write twenty more such thought pieces for the Joint Planning Staff. Then in 1941, when Churchill authorized the creation of a special unit known as the London Controlling Section to plan strategic deception, Wheatley joined its staff housed in the underground war rooms beneath the streets of Whitehall.

The essence of deception is to produce stories, or fictions, that fool the enemy. This came easily to Wheatley, and he was indubitably talented for the task. He told the tale himself in two postwar books, Stranger Than Fiction, and The Deception Planners: My Secret War, as well as in the third volume of his memoirs, The Time Has Come. A biography of Wheatley, who died in 1977, appeared as recently as 2009.

So it’s hardly the case, as claimed for this book, that his story is both untold and forgotten. And the story here is also a pretty thin gruel. We get very few specifics of when and how exactly Wheatley’s own work contributed to the success of strategic deception, or how he fitted into the general picture. While we read (yet again) about the Double-Cross system and its star double agent Garbo, it’s not clear at all that Wheatley had anything to do with it. Indeed, we are told rather disarmingly that as a mere planner he was not indoctrinated into the inner secrets of British intelligence at all. The Spy Novelist Who Lured Hitler to Defeat? Sounds more like a piece of Wheatley’s own fiction.

Still, with its interactive and multimedia platform featuring maps outlining D-Day military plans, Wheatley’s wartime documents, video footage and photographs, this will undoubtedly amuse and intrigue many uninitiated readers fascinated by Britain’s wartime secrets and—who knows?—lead them on to read some serious history elsewhere.

Churchill in Fiction

MICHAEL McMENAMIN


I am generally reluctant to award three stars in novel reviews, but both these mystery thrillers set in World War II, featuring Churchill as a fictional character, deserve it.

Mr. Churchill’s Secretary is set in May 1940, after Churchill became Prime Minister, and involves the murder of one of the Prime Minister’s young typists. We begin with Churchill’s “Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat” speech, which creates an

Professor Stafford, of Victoria, B.C., is the author of Churchill and Secret Service, Roosevelt and Churchill: Men of Secrets, and other works on World War II and intelligence.
opening for the heroine, Maggie Hope, a Briton stuck with “an atrocious [American] accent,” who has put off a mathematics degree at MIT to sell her late grandmother’s Victorian house in London. The house doesn’t sell, but when war is declared she patriotically decides to stay, rent rooms to other young women, and support herself by tutoring. A friend, one of Churchill’s private secretaries, persuades her to apply for the now-vacant secretarial position. She is soon caught up in a conspiracy to assassinate Churchill, fea-
turing IRA and Nazi sleeper agents, Bletchley Park and coded Nazi messages embedded in newspaper adverts.

In a historical note, MacNeal tells us that the ads were actually published, and that WSC himself had a hand in naming her heroine: One of his wartime secretaries was Marian Holmes, who recalled that Churchill once mistakenly called her “Hope.” MacNeal in turn has her fictional Churchill mistakenly call Miss Hope “Holmes.”

Churchill appears in many scenes and dictates several speeches including “Never Surrender.” His fictional portrayal is as good as I have ever read. We see him angry, brow-beating and benevolent, often in the same scene. The sense of fun surfaces when he is told her name: “We need some hope in this office,” he mutters…. “You may stay…”

MacNeal’s treatment of the young Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret is delightful; her fiendish Nazi plot is gripping; and our Maggie has another secret to learn about herself that everyone else from Churchill down knows, but she doesn’t. The author’s wartime London is as evocative as her Winston Churchill portrayal. So three stars for a great, fast-paced story, and three more for an excellent take on the great man.

Philip Kerr is the author of the “Bernie Gunther” novels, about an anti-Nazi homicide detective in prewar Germany. But *Hitler’s Peace* is a stand-alone thriller about an SS plot to assassinate Churchill, FDR and Stalin, set in the weeks before their conference at Teheran in late November 1943.

Kerr grabs our attention with a series of actual events: “Operation Long Jump,” an SS plot to air-drop 100 German assassins into Iran; the allied investigation of the Russian massacre of 4000 Polish officers in the Katyn Forest; and the secret peace feelers between the Germans and Russians in 1943.

The protagonist is a Princeton philosophy professor who analyzes German intelligence for the OSS, assigned to look into the Katyn massacre and determine if German claims of Soviet complicity are true. His quest takes him to Washington, London, Cairo and Teheran with the President, on board USS *Iowa*. The plot is intricate, involving multiple characters from all sides in impressive speaking roles: Roosevelt, von Ribbentrop, Himmler, Schellenberg, Milch, Heydrich’s widow Lina, Kim Philby, Hitler, Canaris, Hopkins, Bormann, Beria, Stalin and Churchill. And these appearances are not cameos: all figure in the plots afoot.

Kerr, a British author, can be forgiven for one false note, on a Roosevelt martini, described by the Princeton professor: “It had way too much gin for my taste, and it was not too cold if you like drinking liquid hydrogen.” To the contrary, FDR used copious amounts of vermouth (one part to two parts gin), according to the Roosevelt Library and National Archives—the classic recipe, not at all extraordinary in 1943, even for a Princeton professor.

This is a fine thriller, easily worth three stars, though Churchill’s role is small. While he is referred to throughout, he has no speaking role until the Teheran meeting commences. Kerr’s portrayal of Churchill deserves three stars because it accurately portrays what Churchill’s reaction would have been under the circumstances posed by the novel. Compared to FDR and Stalin, not to mention Hitler, Churchill has all the choice lines. He comes off well by comparison.

Like MacLean, Kerr offers a historical note, describing the events which actually happened. One which surprised me, and won’t spoil the plot for you, is that in mid-Atlantic, on the way to the Tehran conference, a destroyer in the president’s convoy, USS *Willie D. Porter*, mistakenly fired a torpedo at USS *Iowa*, the battleship carrying the Presidential party! *Iowa* had to take evasive maneuvers to avoid being hit.

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Mr. McMenamin is co-author with his son Patrick of the Churchill thrillers, *The Devaleta Deception, The Parsifal Pursuit* and *The Gemini Agenda*. He also compiles FH’s “Action This Day” department. Novels are rated one to three stars on two questions: Is the portrayal of WSC accurate? and, Is the book worth reading?

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_Fiction Noted_

*Finest Hour* has considered but not commissioned reviews of *The Lion Hunter* by John Clarke (2011), another Churchill assassination novel, set during the August 1941 Atlantic Conference; and _Hitler Invades England_ by George Crall (2010), a counterfactual portrayal of a successful German invasion in 1940. Both of these, one self-published, are first-time efforts, and second attempts are recommended. Unlike _Churchill’s Secret Agent_ by Max Ciampoli *(FH* 153)—a first-time novelist published by a major house—we had no inquiries about these two books, and see no point in extensive criticism.

For a well-documented and believable account of a successful Nazi invasion we recommend Norman Longmate’s _If Britain Had Fallen_ (1972). The latter was reviewed in _FH_ 33, 1981—so long ago that we will republish it in our next issue. —Ed.
I was embarrassed. In the midst of presenting cruise ship lectures on Churchill’s life, one passenger’s question left me humiliated: “Tomorrow we dock in Madeira. Can you tell me about Churchill’s visit there?” Hesitating, I told the passenger I would respond in my next lecture.

Our ship duly pulled into Madeira, the chief island in the Portuguese archipelago 400 km. north of Tenerife, Canary Islands, in the northeastern Atlantic. The next morning my wife and I strolled the main harbor and capital, Funchal. On display was a boat that was reportedly designed by Lawrence of Arabia. As we were about to return to the ship we are accosted by a taxi driver who seemed quite knowledgeable about Churchill’s visit. So we hired him for the afternoon.

“See that large building half way up the mountain?” he began. “That is Reid’s (Palace) Hotel, where Churchill stayed.” The mountain, Cabo Girão, 580 meters, forms the sixth largest cliff in Europe. “I can also take you to where he painted the scene of the small fishing harbor,” the driver added.

“In the 1950s the roads were cobblestone or dirt; transport was by donkeys pulling carts but someone had an old Rolls-Royce which was reconditioned for

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David and Lynn Druckman are world travelers in quest of Churchill; David’s articles have appeared frequently in Finest Hour. For the historical account see “Churchill’s Madeira,” by Terry Reardon (FH 121:30-31).
Churchill.” Anyone who has chased Churchill sites can understand my growing excitement.

At Reid’s Hotel we were graciously greeted by the manager who offered to show us the famous Churchill (or Presidential) Suite. The view from his living room window, over the bay and into the city, was glorious. The most elegant of Reid’s 163 rooms in 1950, it rents today for €2240 per night. There are framed photos of the Churchills and cartoons of WSC throughout the suite, even in the bathroom. Although there is a full kitchen, the suite is insufficient to house more than a half-dozen guests.

As Terry Reardon has recounted in Finest Hour 121, Churchill yearned for a relaxing 1949-50 winter holiday away from cold and dreary England. On November 19th, in a telegram to Bryce Nairn, British Consul in Madeira, Churchill wrote: “query warm, paintable, bathable, comfortable, flowery, hotels etc.”

On 3 January 1950 Winston, Clementine, their daughter Diana, >>
literary assistant Bill Deakin, two secretaries, and two Special Branch detectives arrived by ship in Funchal. Churchill had been there a half century earlier, on his way to South Africa as a war correspondent. This time he was looking forward to relaxing for a few weeks to paint and work on his war memoirs.

Churchill’s idyll was foreshortened on January 12th when, notified that Prime Minister Attlee had suddenly scheduled a General Election for February 23rd, he departed by Flying Boat for London. His stay in Madeira had lasted only nine days and had produced only one oil painting.

The taxi driver drove us to Churchill’s “painta-
ceous” site, in the small fishing village of Camara de Lobos (Chamber of the Wolves), about 10 km. from Reid’s Hotel, high on Cabo Girão overlooking a small bay and tiny harbor full of fishing boats. It looks much the same as it did when Churchill was there.

On a balcony atop the cliff, the Leader of His Majesty’s Opposition created an oil painting entitled “Fishing Port of Madeira” (Coombs 294), a landscape of the bay and fishing village, which he later gave to his son Randolph. It has since passed to his grandson Winston and, most recently, to his great-grandson Randolph.

Thirty meters away from this spot redolent with memories of the Great Man at his easel was a restaur-
ant aptly named the “Churchill Restaurante.” We did not dine there, but purchased a bottle of Madeira wine to take home as a souvenir of our visit.

The next day, on our cruise ship, I opened my lecture with nonchalant ease: “After my last presenta-
tion I was asked....”

Further Reading

Top: Reid’s Hotel in Funchal, owned by the Blandy wine family, remains one of the great hotels of the world. The Churchill Suite is still its most palatial offering; the Druckmans are old hands at convincing hotel managers to let them in for photographs on behalf of Finest Hour! Center: Barbuda captured the scene at Camara de Lobos in one of its Churchill Centenary stamps in 1974. Above: Evidently, as Churchill painted, the sun rose to a tricky angle and the artist used an umbrella to avoid glare as he worked. The painting is now the property of his great-grandson Randolph. Left: Our knowledgeable cabbie-tour guide with Lynn Druckman at “Churchill Restaurante,” which marks the spot where the statesman painted more than six decades ago.
The Art of Public Speaking
“One of those days that they will never forget”

How Blenheim Palace, Chartwell and the Churchill Museum at the Cabinet War Rooms came together to inspire students in the art of public speaking, using the 20th century’s greatest orator.

The education department at Blenheim Palace and learning teams at Chartwell and Imperial War Museum/Churchill War Rooms are committed to increasing access to learning about the life and times of Sir Winston Churchill. We are in a unique position to inspire people through our buildings, collections and stories, and are keen to explore new ways in which to provide valuable learning opportunities to local schools.

In 2012 a partnership between the three sites was created with the aim of using our knowledgeable staff, our collections and high-profile experts to engage the interest of schools which, in many cases, had not previously visited any of these three important sites. The programme, “The Art of Public Speaking,” was a series of talks and master classes to develop public speaking skills and confidence.

Schools are interested in helping their students improve public speaking, presentation and interview skills in preparation for university, for careers, and, in the case of the younger participants, life at a new senior school. Our work often touches on the resonating effect of Churchill’s spoken word. We were pleased at the prospect of a project that promoted development of speaking skills.

Churchill is a perfect model, for he too struggled with public speaking in his early career and only excelled through hard work in developing his skills.

The pilot year of the programme ran during the second half of the school year and involved nearly 400 students from primary and secondary schools throughout the South East, London and Oxfordshire.

The programme aimed to cater for areas which students find challenging. For some this meant confronting nerves, and all three sites experienced last-minute anxiety before the fears were overcome in performance. For others, for whom confidence was not a problem, it was a chance to explore how speaking in public is a two-way exchange and to learn the ways in which they could captivate an audience and really communicate their ideas.

Each of the three sites approached the preparation stages differently. At Blenheim this involved assignments such as “guerrilla guiding,” where students were asked to show visitors around the stately home. At Chartwell, experts were brought in to run a series of master classes, from body language with Mo Shapiro to speech writing with Lord Dobbs, as well as tours with volunteers and sessions with the learning team. At the War Rooms, teams explored speeches by Churchill and others, and used the Churchill Museum’s interactive timeline to discover more about Sir Winston and his life and times.

The programme concluded with a grand showcase event, held at Blenheim and hosted by His Grace the Duke of Marlborough, bringing together the skills.

Hannah McVey

Ms. McVey has served as education officer at Chartwell. A full report is available on request from the author: hannahmcvey@yahoo.co.uk.
experiences and achievements of students selected to represent the three sites, accompanied by their research teams and supporters. It was attended by members of the Churchill family and other supporters of the programme. Curtis Brown Ltd. kindly permitted the use of words from Churchill’s speeches, while The Churchill Centre (UK) funded travel bursaries for some of the schools.

“The atmosphere had just the right level of formality,” said one participant. “Whilst still feeling quite calm and not at all uncomfortable, I enjoyed the whole event very much and to be given the privilege of speaking in such a beautiful building was immense.”

Randolph Churchill, Sir Winston’s great-grandson, concluded the day: “We all have so much to be grateful for, particularly our liberty and freedom of speech. Even today there is at least quarter of the population of the globe that does not enjoy the freedoms we take for granted. We have seen the bravery, in Burma, of Aung San Suu Kyi, seeking to gain democracy for her people, and she made a remarkable address to the Houses of Parliament...It is entirely fitting today that we are enjoying our privileges of debate and upholding the memory of Sir Winston Churchill, who held the torch of liberty so strongly and firmly during World War II.”

A teacher confirmed our hopes for the programme by saying: “It was one of those days that they will never forget!” Added one of the students: “Performing at Blenheim was one of the most memorable events of my life.”

Following this year’s success, the programme will continue. We hope to expand it to other areas of the country, and to explore ways to open it up to as many students as possible. We have seen a new way in which students can be inspired by our properties and buildings, and by the unique man who connects them all.

The following schools participated. Those marked with an asterisk sent representatives to the showcase at Blenheim Palace.

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 1
13. I agree with General Dawes that in the better understanding of the English-speaking nations lies the ark of the Covenant of Civilization and Human Freedom. Who sent this cable to Churchill following a visit to Chartwell in August 1930? (M)


15. On 23 February 1940, at a luncheon for the crew of HMS Exeter and HMS Ajax in the Guildhall, to what event was Churchill referring when he said: “In a dark, cold winter it warmed the cockles of the British heart”? (W)

gested to the Germans in 1943 that she act as a go-between with Churchill? (C)

23. During which conference in December 1953 did Churchill read C.S. Forester’s book, Death to the French? (L)

24. Which earlier statesman did Winston Churchill probably have in mind in his “never, never, never” speech at Harrow on 29 October 1941? (L)

LEVEL 2
16. How did Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, with only 212 students in 1946, get Churchill to accept an invitation to speak? (S)

17. Who recorded an oratory of Churchill in June 1953? (C)

18. Who remarked of WSC’s flight to Moscow in August 1942: “If disposal of all the Allied decorations were today placed by Providence in my hands, my first act would be to award the Victoria Cross to Winston Churchill”? (W)

LEVEL 3
19. Who first conceived of the idea of making Churchill an honorary American citizen? (M)

20. What was the resolution, endorsed by the Oxford Union in 1933, of which Churchill so strongly disapproved? (M)

21. Whom did Churchill describe in 1941 as “The mildest mannered man that ever scuttled ship or cut a throat”? (C)

22. Who was the French woman who sug-

ANSWERS

1. Name any of the six Churchill books published between 1929 and 1934. (L)

2. In what year did Churchill first take his seat in Parliament? (S)

3. WSC called the Morning Post in December 1899: “There is plenty of room here for a quarter of a million men…. More irregular corps are wanted.” Where is “here”? (W)

4. In which year did Churchill become Prime Minister for the second time? (S)

5. In a letter to her husband in February 1916, to which famous colleague of WSC’s did Clementine refer as “a shabby little tike”? (P)

6. Charles Masterman, a Liberal politician and social reformer, amusingly wrote in 1908: “He is full of the poor whom he has just discovered.” To whom did Masterman refer? (C)

7. Who said upon the death of WSC: “The whole world is the poorer by the loss of his many-sided genius, while the survival of this country and the sister nations of the Commonwealth, in the face of the greatest danger that has ever threatened them, will be a perpetual memorial to his leadership, his vision and his indomitable courage”? (S)

8. List the children of Winston and Clementine Churchill. (P)

9. Was Churchill offered a dukedom? (P)

10. How old was Winston’s father when he died on 24 January 1895? (P)

11. What year did Churchill restart writing A History of the English-Speaking Peoples, which he began in 1935, then put aside in 1939 at the outbreak of the Second World War? (L)

12. In 1917, “It was with a sense of awe that [the Germans] turned on Russia the most grisly of weapons.” What was the weapon? (M)

13. E...
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CHURCHILL CENTRE OF THE NATIONS

Almighty God,
before Whom all the nations stand, by Whose Grace
we have been led into the broad, sunlit uplands of enduring
freedom, and through Whose Providence we have been made
to know not dark days, but great days of prosperity and
liberty—days which we shall long remember:

Bless, we pray, we here in New England, who would
gather to keep this Anniversary occasion, from the Thirtieth
of November, born prematurely, in 1874, of a Great
Contemporary, the Right Honourable Sir Winston Leonard
Spencer Churchill; and all of our brothers and sisters in this
country, in the British Commonwealth and in the world
round, who would keep green his legacy of commitment,
character, and courage;

Renew, we ask, our defiance in defeat, our resolution in
war, our magnanimity in victory, and our good will in
peace—especially in times when those who are half-blind
may seem rather far from being half-ready;

Receive, we beseech Thee, our thanksgiving for the leadership
of this Society, for our speakers, for the food before us,
and for the fellowship we share,

That, refreshed, we may so bear ourselves, that even a
thousand years hence, the hours of our lives may not be
found wanting in Thy sight, nor the pudding of our purpose
be found devoid of an ennobling theme.

Remembering, in the Action this Day, also Saint Andrew
and our Right, may we offer this our prayer in gratitude,
with zeal, and not altogether without relish: for the glory of
Thy Holy Name. Amen. ☩