Churchill, Leadership and the War • Highlights from The Last Lion

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Bomber Honours

In his article on Churchill and Sir Arthur Harris, head of RAF Bomber Command (FH 157:39), Christopher Sterling mentions the reluctance of the Air Ministry to single out bomber crews for medals of recognition.

In 2012 Sir John Holmes GCVO KBE CMG was asked by the British Government to conduct an independent Military Medal Review. Based on his findings it was announced that holders of the Air Crew Europe Star who served under Harris were to receive a “Bomber Command” clasp to be worn with that medal. This was an overdue gesture acknowledging the few survivors’ selfless contribution to the war effort. This solution is in line with the procedure adopted towards “The Few,” who are entitled to wear a “Battle of Britain” clasp with their 1939-1945 Star.

NORMAN HURST, COULSDON, SURREY

Only There for the Beer

Patrizio Giangreco (FH 157:12) asks if Churchill ever drank beer. WSC answers this question in the opening paragraph of chapter XXV of My Early Life: “The Relief of Ladysmith”: “We lived in great comfort in the open air, with cool nights and bright sunshine, with plenty of meat, chickens and beer.”

MIKE GROVES, AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

Napoleon, Hohenlinden

FH 157 was excellent as always. I especially enjoyed the comparisons of Churchill and Napoleon. I wonder if part of Churchill’s interest in Napoleon was not only in Napoleon as a “man of action,” but in the Emperor’s tremendous work ethic? Both of them were prodigious workers—to an extent which leaves us mere mortals gasping.

May I note a mild erratum in Allen Packwood’s piece? Hohenlinden was not a Napoleonic battle. The French general was Moreau. Admittedly, Napoleon ordered Moreau into action, but the campaign was really Moreau’s.

JONATHAN HAYES, CORVALLIS, ORE.

Dieppe

Again on the 1942 Dieppe Raid (FH 154): One of the raid’s architects was Captain (later Vice Admiral) John Hughes-Hallett, a good friend of mine in the 1960s. I saw him regularly until his death in 1972.

It is true that the raid caused a lot of suffering but my friend said that Dieppe did have three long-term benefits: First, it showed just how difficult a cross-Channel invasion was going to be. The Americans and Russians were pressing for a quick invasion but Churchill (still haunted by the 1915 Gallipoli disaster) would not be rushed. The raid vindicated his caution.

Second, Dieppe showed that an invasion relying mainly on surprise would not be enough. The Allies would need to be fully and heavily equipped, even with their own “harbours”—the Churchill-inspired “Mulberries,” which Admiral Hughes-Hallet highly credited.

Third, when D-Day did eventually take place in June 1944, Hitler was slow to send his forces to the invasion site because he was suspicious that Churchill was up to the old trick of creating a diversion. Hitler expected the attack to be at the more obvious location around Calais/Dieppe. Valuable time was gained for the Allies by Hitler’s delay.

DR. KEITH SUTER, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

The Churchill Companion

In the Timeline section, Clementine Churchill died in 1977 not 1974. In the Family Tree section, my sister Lucy married in 2007 and I married Mary Brown Brewer in 2005. Diana, Sarah, Randolph and Marigold are second generation and should be in capitals.

Apologies, I have an editor’s eye—I do it in newspapers and books as well!

DUNCAN SANDYS, VIA EMAIL

Editor’s response: Not to mention that we have Mary marrying in 1946! Corrections are appreciated. We’ll take care of these and other errata in the second edition. (If there is one.) ☺
Spurned Violet?
London, November 23rd—Writing in the Daily Mail, Michael Shelden suggests that 21-year-old Violet Asquith flung herself from a cliff in September 1908 in despair over being “ditched” by Winston Churchill, who had married Clementine Hozier earlier that month. Wet and bedraggled, Violet was found on a ledge under a cliff in Cruden Bay, Scotland, where the Asquiths had been spending their holiday.

Shelden claims to have found evidence “buried in the Asquith family papers at the Bodleian Library in Oxford” that Violet had “not wandered off and fallen by accident,” as Prime Minister Asquith put it, but had thrown herself from the cliff over her loss of Winston—with whom she had walked those very paths a month before. But all he offers so far is supposition.

Violet, Shelden believes, was desperately in love with Churchill, who considered her an ace-in-the-hole should his pursuit of Clementine falter. But the only proof he offers is a remark from WSC to his friend Lord Dalmeny: “I behaved badly to Violet, because I was practically engaged to her.”

Violet had invited Churchill to Scotland on August 17th. When his engagement to Clementine was announced two days before, Churchill “sent her a note” postponing his trip. Violet, Shelden writes, was “utterly devastated.” Churchill did go to Cruden Bay on August 24th, “with the wedding less than three weeks away”—a “last-minute dash [to] explain his decision face-to-face. In fury, Clementine threatened to call off the wedding.” Violet “refused” to attend Churchill’s wedding and on September 19th fell from the very same cliffs, causing a desperate search by her parents. Later her father prohibited her from joining Churchill on the platform at Dundee, implying that he did not want to encourage her continued infatuation.

It is well-known that Violet was Churchill’s lifelong admirer, and reasonable to suppose she may have been less than chums with his wife, who held an extreme dislike for her father after he sacked WSC from the Admiralty in 1915. But that proves nothing. We have seen no letters showing Churchill being drawn to Violet, as he was to Pamela Plowden or Ethel Barrymore. It was more of a hero-acolyte relationship.

Finest Hour consulted its battery of the knowledgeable. Professor David Dilks replied that the Asquiths frequently criticized Clementine, but this is irrelevant to Shelden’s argument. Professor Paul Addison, author of Churchill on the Home Front, said that according to the editors of Violet’s letters, her father’s demand that she not appear on the same platform with Churchill “stemmed from Asquith’s dissatisfaction with Churchill’s unauthorized interventions into foreign policy. In alliance with Lloyd George, WSC was then vigorously opposing increases in the naval estimates.…” This is a very plausible explanation. >>
Honored in Barcelona
Jordi Marti de Conejeros

In his “Finest Hour” speech of 18 June 1940, Winston Churchill reflected on the trials ahead: “I do not at all underrate the severity of the ordeal which lies before us; but I believe our countrymen will show themselves capable of standing up to it, like the brave men of Barcelona...and carry on in spite of it, at least as well as any other people in the world.”

Churchill was recalling the Spanish Civil War, when Barcelona and 153 other cities and towns of Catalonia suffered hundreds of aerial bombardments. Aided by German and Italian forces, Spain’s dictator Francisco Franco had bombed the civil population, causing more than 15,000 casualties between 1937 and 1939. Franco’s aim was to secure his dictatorship, Hitler’s and Mussolini’s to blood their troops and test their technology for wars to come. Alluding to Barcelona was Churchill’s way of preparing the British population for likely similar attacks.

During the thirty-six years of Franco’s regime, Churchill’s reference to the courage of Barcelona was not forgotten by the Catalan people, and soon after the first Spanish democratic elections in 1979, many were already talking about building him a monument.

Thirty-five years later, the city paid its debt to the great man on 15 December, with a garden named for him and a monolith in his memory. Mayor Xavier Trias, Sir Winston’s great-granddaughter Jennie Repard and British Consul General Andrew Gwatkin led 150 people in the unveiling, which was covered widely by the media and published in more than ten newspapers and news websites.

Nowadays, when uncertainty is again the rule and the future often seems dark, Sir Winston’s words and works stretch across the years. When everything seemed ready to fall apart, he implored his fellow citizens to carry on: to take the best from themselves and fight for a better tomorrow.

In 1931 Churchill wrote of a Spanish King, Alfonso XIII: “Courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities because, as has been said, it is the quality which guarantees all others,” as Jennie Repard was most kind to remind us. Let us resolve never to forget them.

Mr. Conejeros is executive coordinator of a newly forming Barcelona chapter of The Churchill Centre. Photography by Laura Rueda.
Honored at Home
LONDON, NOVEMBER 30TH— One of this city’s popular statues is that of Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt reposing on a park bench in New Bond Street. The two sit far enough apart for tourists to squeeze between them for a photographic remembrance.

Now the creator of that bronze, Lawrence Holofcener, has made a life-sized statue of a more youthful Churchill for permanent display at the Hyatt Regency’s Churchill Hotel on Portman Square. The subject sits casually in a comfortable chair in the hotel’s new Churchill Bar and Terrace, with a brandy snifter in his right hand and a cigar in his left, looking as if he is about to reply to a visitor’s question or engage in repartee. Fittingly, the piece is entitled, “In Conversation.”

The statue was unveiled today by Churchill descendants Celia Sandys and Randolph Churchill. Other Churchillians in attendance were Jack Darrah of Bletchley Park, Phil Reed of the Churchill War Rooms and Westminster’s Deputy Lord Mayor, Jan Prendergast.

Holofcener, truly a Renaissance man, began his career writing songs for Sid Caesar’s Your Show of Shows, and has extensive credits as a lyricist, playwright, actor, stage director and painter as well as a sculptor. “Rather than depicting Churchill as the war leader in his seventies,” he says, “I decided to represent him at a more youthful age, a man in his early fifties, not yet called to lead his nation, but already a successful author and politician. Creating a second sculpture of Winston Churchill is not just a commission; it is an honour.”

The Churchill’s general manager, Michael Gray, has invited Churchillians to “come in and visit with Mr. Churchill, and perhaps share a libation or cigar with him.”

—MARTIN M. COOPER, CHURCHILLIANS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Another Other Club
AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND—“Nothing in the rules or intercourse of the Club shall interfere with the rancour or asperity of party politics.” So reads Rule #12 of The Other Club, established by Churchill and his great friend F.E. Smith in London in 1911.

Fast forward 100 years to 2011 and the Churchill Dining Club is born on New Zealand’s North Island. The club is in no way political and there is a noticeable absence of rancour and asperity. But good conversation, robust discussion and vigorous debate are essential ingredients of its activities, and membership is open to both sexes.

The object is to assemble a group of people with an interest in the life and times of Sir Winston Churchill, so that all can learn more about him while enjoying the company of like-minded people. At the thrice-yearly meetings, following the model of its famous predecessor, attendance is limited to twenty-four, and the dinner is held in a private dining room.

At meetings every member is asked to share a brief Churchill story, and two members deliver a prepared ten-minute speech. Topics have included Churchill and de Valera; Churchill and the Jews; Winston and Clementine’s love story; Churchill and Chartwell; Churchill and Gallipoli; and: “Should Time magazine have made Churchill Person of the 20th Century?” (Of course! See FH 104 and 105.) During the evening we serve a fine meal and notable wines. (Marlborough, we hope! —Ed.) There is also a challenging quiz and cheerful repartee. Those so inclined may finish their evening off with brandy and a cigar.

—MICK GROVES

Close, but No Cigar
LONDON, FEBRUARY 7TH—From footman to aristocrat, actor Thomas Howes plays it well. In the highly acclaimed BBC/PBS television series “Downton Abbey,” Howes was William, the footman who falls in love with kitchen maid Daisy, goes off to war and comes home to marry her on his deathbed. Switching roles entirely, he now takes on a youthful Winston Churchill in the “Murdoch Mysteries” television series.

Thomas complained that the stately home where the UKTV series is shot prevented him from lighting a cigar in a scene, which predictably turned it from lifelike to a damp squib.

“I was very keen to get the cigar in the show, as it is one of the iconic, visual signatures of Churchill.” Howes said. “But I was forced to pretend to light one before being distracted and shaking out the match, despite the fact it is in the script.” (FH sympathizes, having long taken the view that nobody dies when an actor playing Churchill lights a cigar for a three minute visual.)

Viewers of the period police show, screened on “Alibi” on Mondays at 9pm, saw Detective William Murdoch (Yannick Bisson) try to clear the name of the young Churchill after a visit to Toronto goes awry. WSC finds himself in trouble with the law when he wakes after a wild night to find he is the prime suspect in a friend’s murder.

Police arrive at the gory murder scene in a hotel to find a bloodied, very gorgy and hung-over Churchill answering the door. The scene takes >>
place just after Churchill’s return from the war in South Africa.

H owes, 26, watched hours of clips of the former prime minister for research: “I was told how ‘daunting’ it was to fill such shoes….the world and his wife have an opinion on how I should move and speak.”

“I was told I must watch the films Young Winston and The Gathering Storm, along with lots of news footage. I viewed these clips over and over again just to try and get it right—noting where he places his hands when he speaks, and trying to adopt all the mannerisms, inflections and gestures. It was helpful that I’m doing a much younger, more active Winston, but it was still important he be recognisable as the famous person we all know he will eventually become.”

Churchill was famed for his wit and shrewdness, and Mr. Howes relished learning his often cutting badinage. “I’ve a great scene at a party, where I really get to lay in to critics. You know the story of a woman [Bessie Braddock MP] saying to Churchill, ‘You’re disgustingly drunk,’ and his reply, ‘But tomorrow I’ll be sober and you will still be disgustingly ugly.’ I was excited to do that scene, but I did get slapped.”

Being smacked is not the only physically taxing scene Thomas Howes had to endure during filming, as his alter-ego also is embroidered in a sword fight.

If he can keep playing Churchill roles, Howes says, he’ll have an incredibly long run: “This is the one part in the world that they can’t kill me off in until I am in my 80s. It’s fabulous.”

—LAURA CARO IN THE SUN

“Sterner Days”
TROWBRIDGE, WILTSHIRE, NOVEMBER 9TH— A Second World War veteran’s memories of the conflict include receiving a letter from Winston Churchill. Ken Foster, 87, served for four years—from the age of 17 to 21—as a wireless operator and was sent the signed note from the Prime Minister after his vessel, HMS Viceroy, sank a German submarine.

After the battle, officers found a canister in the water which should have contained inflatable rafts but instead held seventy-three bottles of schnapps. Foster, originally from Sheffield, said: “Captain D suggested that we send a presentation casket to Churchill with a few bottles, and then, a few months later, the PM sent two or three letters of thanks and I ended up keeping one.” The letter is now framed at the home he shares with wife Alma, 84.

WSC wrote: “Thank you so much for sending me the presentation case of brandy from the U-boat, which I shall keep as an interesting souvenir. Will you please convey my thanks to Captain D, Rosyth Escort Force, and the commanding officer and the ship’s company of HMS Viceroy, for all the trouble they took in producing the very handsome casket and offer them my congratulations on the successful attack.”

The former telegram boy’s service career also included being part of the crew of the ship which returned Prince Olav to Norway in May 1945, as part of the country’s liberation: “We just happened to be on hand when Prince Olav was ready to return. We picked him up from a naval base in Scotland and took him to Stavanger, Norway. We have been back twice and have received a hero’s welcome on both occasions.”

Ken and his wife attended Trowbridge’s Remembrance Service, which holds huge significance for him; his older brother Gordon died serving as part of the King’s Regiment in Italy during the Second World War. “I hate the term at these events, ‘they gave their lives.’ Nobody gave their life. My brother didn’t give his life; he loved life and wouldn’t have given it away. For me, a more appropriate sentiment would be to say we are paying respects to those who lost their lives in serving the nation.”

Ken Foster was sent to the Pacific just as the war ended, serving for a year in Hong Kong. He also spent time in Sydney, Australia on the commander-in-chief’s staff. He later worked for the Post Office and as a war pensions officer, still meets old comrades. He is a member of the Trowbridge and District White Ensign Association.

Sir Martin’s Best

Does it have to be only two? Every reply named In Search of Churchill, and one mentioned MG’s slim and eloquent Churchill’s Political Philosophy. Both are one-of-a-kind works, though hard to come by now. (Try bookfinder.com.).

In our 40th anniversary issue, FH named five one-volume works by Martin Gilbert as among the best fifty books of the past fifty years:

1) In Search of Churchill: A Historian’s Journey, 1994, 338 pages, Zoller A558. The answer to those who accuse Gilbert of being uncritical. Having examined more sources and people than anyone in the process of writing the Official Biography, Sir Martin says he came away even more impressed with Churchill’s intellect, generosity, statesmanship and humanity. Cited by Finest Hour as the best Churchill book of 1994, it is especially useful in showing just how the author found his amazing primary source material and ferreted out information from often obscure witnesses to history.
Namrata Singh in The Times of India writes: “Extraordinary situations demand extraordinary leadership. But once the situation is diffused, the very remarkable traits in a leader can at times lead to his redundancy. In 1945, even after Churchill successfully led Britain through World War II, displaying super-leadership qualities, he lost the election. Cut to the present. Vikram Pandit, a year after he was named CEO of Citigroup, had to fire-fight a rather unforeseen crisis situation that gripped the global financial world. Some doubted his capabilities, but after suffering deep losses, the bank under Pandit’s leadership returned to profit in 2010 after paying off the government aid which it got in a bailout in 2008. Last week Pandit resigned, much to the shock of the investor fraternity.” Well, Churchill never did that.

“The Conservative party can never get too much of Churchill,” says Larry Elliott in The Guardian, “so there will be many who will be hoping that his words [‘the end of the beginning’] are as appropriate for describing the state of the economy today as they were for outlining the global balance of power in 1942. Make no mistake,” Elliott continues, “news that Great Britain’s economy grew by 1% in the third quarter of 2012 does not mark the end of the downturn that began more than five years ago….Over the past twelve months, national output has been flat and remains 3% lower than in early 2008. Recovery has been weaker and slower than in any cycle for which reliable records exist, including the Great Depression of the 1930s.” Things were pretty grim in 1945, too.

Amelia Hill, quickly repeated by scores of media outlets, wrote in The Guardian on February 6th: “Around 115 years after it was written, the only known poem by an adult Churchill has been discovered….The author peppers the poem with the names of remote outposts defending Britain’s interests around the world—many of which he would have visited as a young officer and even fought at—including Weihaiwei in China, Karochau in Japan and Sokoto in north-west Nigeria….Douglas J. Hall, from the Churchill War Rooms in London, is adamant that Churchill ‘was truly a poet at heart.’”

The poem is written in crayon, in words not particularly reminiscent of him, and signed in ink. A respected autograph dealer says it’s genuine, but he is the owner. Why Churchill would write a poem in crayon and sign it in ink might give pause to a buyer about to spend $15,000. Where is the provenance? But the big question is: How many errors can you spot in Amelia Hill’s paragraph above? A prize of five back issues of your choice to the winner! §

2) Churchill: A Life, 1991, 1066 pages, Zoller A528. Not an abridgement, as is often believed, this is a ground-up biography designed to be read in much less time than the Official Biography. Gilbert includes much information not known when the original volumes were written, especially the early volumes. Chronological, like the O.B., this is an indispensable trove of well-researched facts.

3) Churchill: A Photographic Portrait, 1974, 354 photos, Zoller A383. Complementing Lady Soames’s Family Album as one of the two best photo-documentaries published to date, this is less a photo collection than an archival documentation, with emphasis on the military-political side of WSC’s life. Sir Martin’s captions are expert and extensive. Highly recommended, it has been reprinted frequently over the years and is readily available.

4) Churchill and America, 2005, 504 pages. Churchill’s love of his “mother’s land” was evident from an early age and stayed with him for life, but he was not an uncritical lover. He deplored U.S. reluctance to engage in world affairs after World War I, and in Russia after WW2, and hoped for more than he got from the “special relationship.” Here is the whole story, good, bad and ugly, with the fastidious maps that are Gilbert’s hallmarks. Reading like a fast-paced novel, this book is now the standard work on the subject.

5) Churchill and the Jews, 2007, 384 pages. The subject is tracked individually and collectively, beginning with Churchill’s representing a heavily Jewish constituency and ending with his support for Israel, with vast detail on his Zionism, from the Balfour Declaration to the 1937 Peel Commission and WW2. No one is better able to write such a history, which eclipses the earlier works by Rabinowicz and Cohen.

Sir Martin Gilbert

LONDON, FEBRUARY 22ND— Last spring Sir Martin sustained an hypoxic brain injury that forced him into early retirement. He was in final preparations of the 1942 volume of the Churchill Documents, which Hillsdale College Press will publish this year.

Sir Martin has devoted his life to writing “true history.” Rather than using adjectives and adverbs ascribed by others, Sir Martin believes in presenting the facts, through chronology and context, and character, whether in a leader or a foot soldier, as can be revealed by his decisions and actions. Sir Martin and I both want to thank all Churchilians for your friendship and readership through the years.

—ESTHER GILBERT §
Q In our next Churchill novel, our heroine reporter places a transatlantic call from Berlin to William Randolph Hearst to send her $5000 care of American Express in Munich. Aside from that being too easy, we want to add more suspense. So...the call to America doesn’t go through and an increasingly desperate Mattie calls her godfather, Winston Churchill. Now $5000 or so was real money in those days, so:
(a) Would Churchill have had ready access to that kind of money, so his bank could wire it to American Express the same day? And (b) If not, which of his many wealthy friends would he call to help out his goddaughter in distress?

Michael McMenamin, Cleveland

A According to the “Currency” chapter in our new Churchill Companion, the pound had risen from $3.66 in 1920 to $4.80 in 1930, thanks to the return of the Gold Standard, and stayed there for much of the Thirties, despite Britain going off gold in 1931. So $5000 would have been equivalent to £1042 or about a thousand guineas.

Now that was real money, all right, but Churchill often made that much for an article or two—e.g., the Daily Mail paid him £500 or about $2500 for his traffic accident story in 1932. So he would probably have been able to lay hands on a stray thousand in an emergency. His bank was Lloyd’s Bank Ltd. in Pall Mall.

Brendan Bracken (1901-1958) here leaving Number Ten with his great friend in 1940, was a successful publisher, but those whom Andrew Roberts calls “The Respectable Tendency” looked upon Bracken as a mountebank, if not worse.
Whole books have been written about Churchill’s leadership. How can we hope to cover it in one issue? We can’t—but we can highlight aspects that tend to be overlooked.

Justin Lyons considers the ancient Greeks and the roots of Churchill’s statesmanship. Like Plato and Aristotle, whose works he absorbed, Churchill was able to meld political skill and knowledge into “a coherent body of political thought as a guide.” This, Lyons writes, “distinguishes the statesman from the political actor, or the mere politician.” From Churchill’s mountain of archives, we extract the essence of his leadership.

How the leader maintained and improved public morale in the “sterner days” of the war has often been described, but never have we heard it so well related and appraised as by a high school senior. This essay by Sarah Howells, now a freshman at Princeton, won the first Churchill Centre Research Paper Competition last year. Her work is fresh and expertly documented—well able to stand with the other articles herein.

A view of Churchill and the Indian Army by Raymond Callahan will serve as our newest rebuttal when critics complain that we only publish praise. Finest Hour has striven for years to consider Churchill “in the round.” Here a respected scholar considers an aspect of his leadership that was slightly askew. Does Churchill’s attitude toward the Indian Army brand him a racist, as some writers contend? Of course not, says Dr. Callahan. But it is evidence of a fault in Churchill’s historical memory—failing to update impressions he had acquired as a young officer in 19th century India.

The Commons was startled in 1943 when Churchill spoke of the Treaty between Britain and Portugal in 1373. Fred Glueckstein explores this obscure story and another aspect of Churchill’s leadership: his mastery of history. In fact, Britain was quite prepared to seize the Azores, which were desperately needed as a base against the U-boats. Churchill’s historical wisdom led him to a way to occupy them peaceably—with the help of a treaty 570 years old.

To be a leader is to be a visionary, as Winston Churchill demonstrated in his 1937 article, “Will There Be War?” This was a year before the cataclysm of Munich. WSC with his vision was leading the public—not with dark warnings of the Nazi threat, which some think he spent all his time doing, but by sober contemplation of how peace might yet be preserved. He asked: Were readers thinking about Europe in the midst of the abdication of one King and the coronation of another? Churchill was.

Leslie Hore-Belisha would seem a curious choice to memorialize Churchill. After the Fall of Tobruk, a decade before he wrote the article herein, he had co-sponsored a motion of no confidence in the government. Churchill told him he would fight back with a bigger gun. “He gave his warning with a twinkle in his eye,” Hore-Belisha adds, “but I knew that he meant business....it was not long before his high explosives and shrapnel were falling all around me.” The motion was defeated, 475-25. But Hore-Belisha lived in an age when collegiality off the floor was equal to fierce contention on it—when there was no 24/7 news media to fan the flames of discord. Magnanimous as ever, Churchill forgave his little rebellion, and gave him an office in 1945.

Those close to WSC knew of “his intense loyalty to friends, even if he falls out with them politically,” Hore-Belisha adds. “Yet even in the heat of the argument he will often retain a deep regard and even personal affection for the man he is fighting, particularly if the man he is fighting really fights back.”

If you want an appreciation of leadership, ask a marine. It is quite wrong to suppose, says Col. John McKay, that the degree of need determines the quality of the leader. Churchill did not create the situations in which he provided answers; they were simply the most appropriate response to those situations. There is no guarantee that the leader who emerges will be good. Yet unless there is a need, the function of a leader cannot be discharged. The emergent leader must cultivate, as Churchill did, “a temperament suited to crisis.”

These are a few of the aspects of leadership we may find in studying Sir Winston Churchill. As in life...
The Leader as Classical Statesman

What gave Churchill such influence over the fate of his nation was not merely his constitutional position, but his ability to stamp his own unyielding courage and determination onto a fearful and vacillating populace: to be the encouragement and embodiment of all that was best in them—and thus truly to lead.

JUSTIN D. LYONS

Buckingham Palace, 13 September 1940: In one of the most iconic photographs from “the year nothing surpasses,” the Prime Minister tours bomb damage with the King and Queen. The Queen cemented herself in the affection of Londoners when she remarked of that day: “Now I can look the East End in the face.”
Statesmanship is revealed in the joining of political skill with profound political knowledge. Looking to a coherent body of political thought as a guide for action is what distinguishes the statesman from the political actor, or the mere politician.

Every sane adult possesses some degree of political knowledge—taxes, police, laws, war and peace at the very least. There is a continuum of such knowledge. It is enhanced and increased through experience and participation in political affairs, reaching an apex when these subjects are coupled with a deep understanding of political matters and their relation to human life as a whole: “At the top of the ladder we find the great statesman who possesses political knowledge, political understanding, political wisdom, political skill in the highest degree....”1 The statesman, then, approaches, if not achieves, something like political philosophy put into action.

The difficulty with writing about a statesman is that those thought to have achieved that exalted rank rarely write anything like a treatise on their political philosophy. If one wishes to understand the guides they follow, one must extract their political thought from the evidence available, by noting consistencies in their actions and the speeches that mark their political affairs.

For the student of statesmanship, Churchill yields near-unbounded riches. He was a major actor in the greatest events of his century. His six decades in politics produced a remarkably copious record, not only of political views, but serious reflections on the nature of man. He delivered thousands of speeches—they fill eight volumes—and wrote over 800 articles and essays for the public press, plus an autobiography, a novel, a travelogue, and many single and multi-volume histories, speech collections and biographies—altogether fifty books in eighty volumes. This wealth of sources has fueled countless historical and biographical assessments of Churchill’s life and career, and gives us a wide field of reflection in considering his statesmanship.

Churchill is that unique political leader in whom thought and action are united. Statesmanship is fundamentally concerned with leadership, that is, it is fundamentally concerned with action—but not ordinary action, and not unreflective action. Truly great deeds must have the spirit and the mind of the actor behind them. Churchill led his people in a desperate battle, but his leadership was not unreasoned or incoherent—if it were, it would not have met with success.

Churchill himself stressed that effective leadership depends upon consistent and coherent thought: “Those who are possessed of a definite body of doctrine and of deeply rooted convictions upon it will be in a much better position to deal with the shifts and surprises of daily affairs than those who are merely taking short views, and indulging their natural impulses as they are evoked by what they read from day to day.”2 Such a remark should provoke us to ask: Did Churchill himself possess a definite body of doctrine? If so, of what did it consist? From what sources was it drawn? One place to start looking is in the political thought the West inherited from the ancient Greeks.3

Political Ethics in Ancient Greece

The statesman is an important figure in the works of Plato and Aristotle—the political ruler in the true sense. The art of political rule involves both theoretical knowledge and the ability to use that knowledge to shape the community in the struggle between the necessary and the desirable.4 The ancients conceived of politics as the “architectonic art”—as providing the architecture of a society. Aristotle tells us that because the aim of politics is the highest good for human beings, it necessarily includes the ends of all the other arts—all the activities of man.

Politics, in the ancient understanding, reaches to every aspect of life. The true political community, the polis, is not achieved simply by living together and interacting economically; it exists for the sake of living well—not materially but in terms of virtue—and raising its citizens to the fullest human life.5 The polis must give careful attention to character formation—to virtue and vice, not simply to business and property.

Politics must therefore concern itself with ethics. In fact, ethics is a kind of politics—an inquiry or study of the habits of soul. It is intimately related to politics because the art of legislation is the treatment of the soul. Politics is the application of knowledge of the nature of man to the guidance of the conduct of man: “for we posited the end of politics to be the highest good, and politics takes the greatest care in making citizens of a certain quality, i.e., good and disposed to noble actions.”6 The concern of the statesman, then, is to guide the lives of the citizens toward these ends through political forms and practice.

One of the greatest challenges to this classical understanding of statesmanship is that the modern democratic conception of politics does not allow the extension of governmental authority into the lives of its citizens in anything like the degree envisioned by classical politics. The aim >>

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of the political community toward virtue above all else necessarily leads to a need for legislation of the private things as well as public. Hence, the laws must deal with many areas of human life which the modern understanding would classify as off limits to public authority.7

Indeed, modern democratic sensibilities rebel at the idea of the individual citizen being shaped in any important way by the regime or the statesman. Politics is no longer a matter of soul; therefore its reach and scope has been greatly diminished since the ancient Greeks.

Churchill’s Classical Frame of Reference

While classical politics concerned itself with a much greater range of issues than today, it also perceived that there were limits on what could be achieved, or should be attempted, politically. Here Churchill was in agreement. There have, of course, been modern political projects which embodied absolute control over the lives of citizens: Communism and Nazism.

Churchill rejected them absolutely. Hitler was a creature of evil; Stalin was no less ruthless and bloodthirsty. But, beyond this, Churchill rejected their regimes because they destroyed the individuality of their citizens, dehumanized life, and represented unhealthy political principles. He perceived something of the understanding of politics as the treatment of souls and, hence, the task of the statesman in warding off political diseases from both the bodies and souls of his citizens. As he said in 1928:

There is a strong parallel between politics and medicine. Those in politics can see some of the diseases with which medicine is grappling. Communism is a form of cancer. It is a political cancer—the revolt of a single cell which perverted and corrupted those immediately round it and established a foreign principle of life governed by laws unknown to the rest of the Empire, entailing endless misery, manifesting itself by the most violent symptoms and requiring remedies about which there is great difference of opinion. [Laughter.] Some say the knife, but all are agreed that the remedies should be prompt and drastic. [Cheers].9

Churchill’s detestation of political forms that subordinate the individual to the state flows from his understanding of human nature. Politics must take into account certain realities of human makeup. To attempt to destroy or suppress them leads to tyranny. It is not only because human nature puts practical limits on political programs that the state should not attempt to form society in preconceived moulds; it is because freedom and happiness go hand in hand. Like Aristotle, Churchill understood the true political arrangement to be rule over free and equal persons, providing all with the opportunity to reach their fullest potential. And this is what he encouraged Great Britain to be.

The Essence of Churchill’s Leadership

Churchill manifested a deep concern for continued freedom of speech and dissent as the backbone of a healthy political arrangement. The all-embracing character of classical politics is most closely approximated by a modern democracy at war. When a nation is fighting for its survival, the lives of its citizens are necessarily more directed than in peacetime. Churchill viewed this as a regrettable necessity.9 Yet, even under great duress, Britain did not attempt or contemplate measures to crush the individuality of citizens.

Churchill was extremely proud of the British political tradition—to him, English Common Law was a monument deserving of enduring fame. He devoted his powers to inspiring Britons to be worthy of their way of life.

Here is another meeting place between the ancients and Churchill’s statesmanship. While Churchill was not in favor of invasive governmental action to form the character of citizens; he was nonetheless concerned with that character. Whether lecturing at University of London on the proper form of education10 or rallying Britain to defend the right, he used his powers of speech and persuasion to lead his fellow citizens to display in action the true, the just, and the noble.

While Churchill believed that the British people possessed great strengths, he also knew that the modern world and even democracy itself could sap those strengths. He knew that political communities need leaders who can help people overcome the temptations and fears that prevent thoughtful and resolute action. To some extent this task requires that the leader stand outside of the regime, that he not be subject to the same weaknesses as those he leads.

In considering how democracies may be preserved, Aristotle suggests that they need something to counteract democratic excesses.11 The best ruler for a democracy, he says, is in fact someone with aristocratic tendencies.

Churchill, the partisan of democracy, was also the product of Victorian aristocracy. The champion of the many, he admired the excellence of the few; thus his own confidence in his leadership. What gave Churchill such influence over the fate of his nation was not merely his constitutional position, but his ability to stamp his own unyielding courage and determination onto a fearful and vacillating populace, to be the encouragement and embodiment of all that was best in them—and thus truly to lead.
Understanding the Nature of Man

Politics for Churchill was also the application of knowledge of human nature to the guidance of human conduct. But using human nature as a guide requires understanding of the role and meaning of history in human affairs. The progressive philosophy of history postulates a time when the story of man will end—when human existence will resolve itself into a final form. This “end of history” will see the end of conflict, an end to all problems presented by human nature, a state of perfect peace and freedom.12

Such an understanding was rejected by the ancients—and by Churchill, who found in history relevant lessons for present action precisely because the nature of man remains consistent and unchanging. Equally, Churchill rejected political approaches built on such a philosophy as necessitating cruelty, or foolishness.13

Neither did Churchill think that democracy would inevitably triumph because history demanded it. He thought democracy was the best political approach, and that it could triumph—but only if democratic peoples conducted themselves in a worthy manner.

In rejecting the progressive philosophy of an end to history, Churchill acknowledged the complexity of human existence which resisted its simplification or systematization. He knew that in politics, one does not deal in absolutes or certainties. His political approach can be summed up nicely with an excerpt from a broadcast delivered in 1944:

I hope you will not imagine that I am going to try to make you some extraordinary pronouncement tonight, and tell you exactly how all the problems of mankind in war and peace are going to be solved. I only thought you would like me to have a short talk with you about how we are getting on....14

Churchill the statesman found his way in an uncertain world through prudence; he makes genuine choices rather than being pulled along by the flow of events. Those choices may be judged to be right or wrong, just or unjust—but if they are not made, they cannot be so judged. Churchill made judgements because he believed there is a right way and a wrong way to proceed. Yet he realized that the nature of the world is such that even right decisions are not guaranteed success.

Churchill’s ability to chart and maintain a consistent course for Britain under the looming threat of destruction made him a great leader. That his thought and action were directed toward and devoted to the principles of justice, freedom, and peace made him a great man. These two forms of greatness elevate him to the highest level of statesmanship.

Leadership and the Temples of Peace

Churchill used the phrase “temple of peace” as a desired product of international peace-keeping organizations.15 But that phrase can be applied in a larger sense to the conduct of politics as a whole, which strives to mitigate conflict and direct the community toward the common good. In Churchill’s understanding, however, while the temple may be laid on secure foundations, it can never be finally established. In the search for peace, as he saw it, the duty of statesmen is unending—and never finished. Churchill stands between the excessive confidence of the utopians and the excessive fear of the appeasers. Peace is not guaranteed, he tells us. It can only be achieved by long journeys over perilous roads. But the perils that must be faced are no excuse for shirking the quest.

“Never Despair”

The study of Churchill’s statesmanship deserves a central place in the scholarship of the politics of freedom.16 He believed in the metaphysical freedom of mankind, and insisted that it should be reflected in political arrangements. He believed that political freedom was necessary to the flourishing of the human spirit. But the conditions of freedom, he warned us repeatedly, do not simply happen. Humanity must fight to establish them, struggle to maintain them, and sacrifice to defend them.

Churchill brought to these tasks not only immense courage but a great degree of political knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and skill—and because these tasks have no end in this world, the lessons of his statesmanship will remain central to the political experience. They are, to echo the Greek historian Thucydides, “a possession for all time.”

Churchill led a particular people in a particular struggle in a particular time. Yet that struggle was only a part of the contest of age-old forces which have always shaped the >>
The Leader as Classical Statesman...

eperience of man: the desire for peace, goodwill, and freedom; the unacceptability of cruelty, hatred and conquest. We may therefore take his message as inspiration to undertake the tasks we have still before us:

“The day may dawn when fair play, love for one’s fellow men, respect for justice and freedom will enable tormented generations to march forth serene and triumphant from the hideous epoch in which we have to dwell. Meanwhile, never flinch, never weary, never despair.”

“Churchill stands between the excessive confidence of the utopians and the excessive fear of the appeasers. Peace is not guaranteed, he tells us. It can only be achieved by long journeys over perilous roads. But the perils that must be faced are no excuse for shirking the quest.”

Endnotes

5. “It is evident, therefore, that the city [polis] is not a partnership in a location and for the sake of not committing injustice against each other and of transacting business. These things must necessarily be present if there is to be a city, but not even when all of them are present is it yet a city, but [the city is] the partnership in living well both of households and families for the sake of a complete and self-sufficient life.” The Politics, 99 (1280b29-34).
11. For an example of a discussion of how regimes are moderated by pursuing practices that run contrary to their natural tendencies, see Aristotle, The Politics, 189-90, (1319b33-1320b17).
12. The primary exemplars of the progressive philosophy of history are the writings of Kant, Hegel and Marx. The progress of man through history posited by these writers, while driven by different forces in each theory, is marked by conflict. Progress occurs through conflict. Whatever the appearances of any particular moment of historical strife, the general trend is always forward. But progressive philosophies of history do not hold conflict to be a permanent part of the human condition. They look to a time when conflict will be resolved, when it will no longer define human relations. The old social and political forms will then be archaic and meaningless. Political life as we know it will be done away with—will be transcended. This is what one modern writer called “the end of history”: the point at which the historical process has come to fruition, has realized its end.
13. Churchill rejected the progressive philosophy of history on both historical grounds (human history does not tell of a necessary progress, or give any promise that it will occur) and on philosophical grounds (the nature of man is fundamentally fixed, and the problems this presents, for both domestic and international political communities, are those which any realistic and reasonable political understanding must take into account). To deny these facts, or pretend that they will be overcome, leads to unacceptable political consequences: To demand that they disappear, as in Communist schemes, necessitates cruelty and oppression; to assume that they will disappear leaves us dangerously out of touch with reality.
15. As in “The Sinews of Peace,” usually referred to as the “Iron Curtain speech,” Fulton, Missouri, 5 March 1946, Complete Speeches, VII 7285-93.
Roosevelt, Churchill and the Hapless Chaplain

REV. JOHN RAWLINSON

Bishop C. Kilmer Myers of California told of a delightful encounter with Churchill and Roosevelt which I am certain appears in no account of World War II. It resided only in Bishop Myers’s memory.

In 1945 Myers, then a U.S. Navy chaplain, was aboard his ship in port when he was summoned to the captain’s cabin “on the double” with his Prayer Book. Without explanation, the C.O. led him off the ship to a waiting car, and they sped off into the unknown.

En route, the captain said that there had been a call for an Episcopal chaplain, and Myers was the nearest one available. Soon they came to a heavily guarded villa; they paused for security clearance and were waved in. At the entrance, scrutinized by more security personnel, they were led down a long hallway. At the end were guards who opened two imposing doors. As they stepped in, Myers was astonished to see President Franklin Delano Roosevelt seated at a desk, poring over a variety of papers. He stood nervously in silent awe before the President’s desk.

Roosevelt looked up and apologized for keeping the chaplain waiting. He said that he would like to have a church service on the upcoming Sunday, and he hoped the chaplain would conduct it. With that, he pulled a blank sheet of paper from his desk, writing as he spoke. Identifying the coming Sunday according to the church calendar, Roosevelt said: “So the lessons for that Sunday will be...” and noted their substance—from memory. Next he began to mention particular hymns, and their numbers, as appropriate to the lessons, writing them down as he spoke.

Roosevelt handed the sheet to Myers, saying these were his suggestions, and that the chaplain could, of course, select other hymns if he preferred them.

Myers, stunned by the President’s prodigious liturgical and ecclesiastical knowledge, asked if the Prime Minister would be joining them for the service. The President said he thought so, and Myers asked whether as a matter of courtesy he should consult the Prime Minister about the content of the service. Roosevelt said it would be a good idea, dismissing Myers and his C.O. to consult Mr. Churchill.

Myers and his captain passed through the guards, reentered their car and careened toward their next stop. Shortly they were at the front gate of another villa. Passing through its security, they were handed along by more guards, and walked down another long hallway to sentries who opened two more imposing doors. They were in Winston Churchill’s bedroom.

The Prime Minister lay abed, with an array of State papers strewn atop the covers. Clearly they were anticipated. Churchill greeted the chaplain, mentioned the coming service, and reached for a sheet of paper. He noted the ecclesiastical day, the lessons, and suitable hymns—like Roosevelt from memory. That done, he dismissed his visitors, who returned to their car.

Back in the car, Myers compared the two sheets of paper—the President’s and the Prime Minister’s—realizing with consternation that there was nothing on either sheet that agreed!

Uncomfortable, Myers told his captain that he was at a loss. Which set of “suggestions” should he use? Whom should he offend? The captain decided that they should again consult the President. Back they went to the President’s villa where, navigating through the layers of security, they were again ushered into the President’s study.

Roosevelt was surprised to see them. The bewildered Myers explained that his and Churchill’s notes had nothing in common, and thrust the two sheets before the President. Roosevelt glanced briefly at the documents, smiled and said to Myers: "Let the old son of a bitch have his way!" With that, Myers and the captain returned to their ship.

From the foregoing paragraphs, canny readers will recognize the scene as the Yalta Conference of 4-11 February 1945. Roosevelt’s study was in the Livadia Palace, which also hosted the plenary sessions; Churchill was housed in the Vorontsov Palace a short distance away. (See “Livadia Revisited,” FH 146, Spring 2010.)

Bishop Myers closed by admitting that to his great regret, he was unable to conduct the service. Just before it was to occur, his own ship was ordered to move. Clearly, even the President of the United States could not keep a naval vessel in port against sailing orders!

Endnotes

1. The lectionaries of the Church of England and Episcopal Church did not correspond in 1945, and lessons very rarely coincided on the same Sunday. A colleague looked into the details and discovered the following, assuming the encounter took place in Yalta, 4-11 February 1945. If the Sunday in question was 11 February 1945—the sixth Sunday after Epiphany—the lessons for Morning Prayer according to the Church of England, were Micah 2 and John 5:24-end or James 5. But according to the 1945 Lectionary for the U.S. Episcopal Church the lessons for Morning Prayer were Isaiah 2:6-19 and Matthew 25:14-29. —Editor, NEHA Newsletter

2. With the help of Professor Warren Kimball we determined that the date of the service was indeed 11 February, the last day of the Yalta conference; and that Chaplain Myers was probably stationed on one of two U.S. minesweepers, USS Pinnacle or USS Implacit, the only U.S. Navy ships moored at Yalta harbor. At 4 p.m. on the 11th, the President left Yalta for Sebastopol; three hours later he boarded USS Carotin, moored at the Soviet naval base there. Early the next morning FDR motored to Saki airfield for a flight to Cairo, the first leg of his homeward journey. Since Myers had missed the services on the 11th, he could not have been stationed aboard Carotin.

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The Leader as Communicator

CHURCHILL’S EFFORTS TO UNIFY BRITAIN, 1940-41

On 3 September 1939, King George VI spoke to Britain and the Empire, announcing his government’s declaration of war on Germany in response to German aggression against Poland. After denouncing Nazi Germany, he called on the British people to mobilize for war. The next day, the Daily Sketch published excerpts of the King’s speech, with his defining appeal as its title: “Stand calm, firm and united.”1

As the British banded together, Winston Churchill, first at the Admiralty and then as prime minister, emerged as the figurehead of the war effort in public and in Parliament. While Churchill as premier clearly guided British military efforts abroad, his leadership on the home front was notable. His techniques included a vivid public image, powerful and compelling speeches and creation of a coalition government, which in turn rewarded him with powerful civilian support.

When Churchill assumed the premiership, German forces were conquering wide swaths of territory throughout Europe. The British watched in horror as their allies, chief among them France, fell to Germany. The Western world seemed to be collapsing upon itself, and Britain was the only power left to challenge Germany. By 5 September 1940, only a year after the declaration of war, German bombs were falling on England’s capital. Nazi leader Adolf Hitler hoped that class strife and chaos in England caused by the destruction would help pave the way for German forces to invade the island.2

During the eight-month air attack known as the Blitz, the British government employed propaganda such as posters, videos and the British Broadcasting Corporation, a popular news source, to inform and reassure civilians. The government monitored morale and opinions of Londoners, carefully gauging the stability of the home front.3 Although the crime rate rose, along with outrages of political dissenters, the people’s high morale and resolve shredded Hitler’s hopes for their collapse. By mid-May 1941, with other fields of conquest in mind, the Germans no longer had the will to continue the attack on Britain. Although the war was far from over, Britons could rest assured that their homeland would be safe from invasion.

The Germans had underestimated a nation determined to “Keep Calm and Carry On”4 under the stress of war. Churchill not only organized the military effort he acted as a spokesman for the government. Civilians looked up to the prime minister who worked “with a calm assurance and a conviction that this, at last, was the realization of his destiny: to lead his beloved nation in an all-out war for survival and for the universal values it represented.”5 Widespread confidence in his leadership gave the populace a cause worth fighting for and the willpower to carry on.

Churchill as a Public Figure

As one of the iconic politicians of the 20th century, Churchill made his bold and overt character a fundamental component of his leadership and a symbol of the war effort.

The Churchill Centre awarded first prize—a $1000 scholarship—in its first annual Churchill Research Paper Competition for American high school students, to Miss Howells for this paper, written as a student at The Harker School in San Jose, California—an independent project under the mentorship of Dr. Ruth Meyer, a Harker history teacher. She is now a freshman at Princeton University in New Jersey.

Her detailed paper, with fifty-one footnotes, relied on a sound and diverse bibliography. Our judges deemed the author a competent and professional writer who selected appropriate quotations to back up her conclusions. We gave her high marks for clearly explaining that Churchill had opposition, which desired to bargain with Germany for an end to the fighting in 1940. “In terms of research, organization and sustained argument,” wrote one judge, “her paper was much the best, showing a great deal of promise for her as a student.” As with all submissions, the article was subject to Finest Hour’s usual editing process.

The deadline for the 2013 second annual competition is September 15th. Guidelines are available from The Churchill Centre website.
“I have, myself, full confidence that if all do their duty, if nothing is neglected, and if the best arrangements are made, as they are being made, we shall prove ourselves once again able to defend our island home, to ride out the storm of war, and to outlive the menace of tyranny, if necessary for years, if necessary alone. At any rate, that is what we are going to try to do.”

—WSC reporting on Dunkirk, House of Commons, 4 June 1940

With his quintessentially British appearance and demeanor, he enjoyed a widespread appeal. He was often portrayed in photographs and cartoons, and regularly roamed about, cigar in hand, surveying the effects of German destruction. The people trusted him to protect the island, despite the frightening insecurity of World War II. At the same time, British confidence gave hope among the downtrodden and overrun countries of Europe.

Churchill’s stubborn unwillingness to let war disrupt normal life in England was broadly admired. Despite the many precautions required by the emergency, he himself was famously determined to maintain his day-to-day routine. By remaining in London whenever he expected a major raid, Churchill related to Londoners during the worst of the Blitz. There were risks associated with being a leader in the path of danger, but Churchill was unmovable, convincing the people to follow his example, whatever the horror or threat of attack.

Many famous and humorous quotations exemplify Churchill’s unflagging character. When warned by his wife and ministers of the personal risks he faced, Churchill simply replied: “... as a child my nursemaid could never prevent me from taking a walk in the park when I wanted to do so. And as a man, Adolf Hitler certainly won’t.” His unwillingness to back down was an inspiration. The nation adopted his resolve.

Churchill’s physical appearance contributed to his image. In addition to his imposing figure and ever-present cigar, his dress exemplified his role and leadership. His “siren suit” was a personally-designed kind of one-piece suit, easy to put on or take off, if he wished a siesta—a habit he had learned in Cuba as a young man. Adding to the fast-accumulating Churchill legend, what the public called his “rompers” were world famous. Nor were they all utilitarian: some siren suits were made of velvet, silk and wool for the “best” parties at Downing Street.
The Leader as Communicator...

A gentleman at heart, Churchill was conscious of his public persona. While respected by aristocrats, he appealed equally to the masses, suffering under wartime shortages and rationing. The image of him working away for the country, clad in his odd yet practical outfits, appealed to the people and enhanced their trust. 10

Supporting his image, photographs were distributed to show the public the inner workings of their leader’s daily life. Photographs and cartoons in newspapers and magazines, circulated widely, Churchill often displaying the “V” for Victory sign, his signature gesture. The V-sign’s origins are lost in antiquity, but recently it had been said to have represented a powerful symbol of victory, corresponding to the Morse code “V”—three dots and a dash—and the opening notes of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony.11 In one photograph circulated by the Ministry of Information, Churchill strolls down Downing Street in a dark suit and Homburg, his right arm in the air, two fingers creating the “V.” Through this simple gesture, Churchill displayed his optimism in a way with which people could associate, symbolizing the unwavering certainty that “all will come right.”

Another 1940 photograph shows Churchill taking shelter from bombs during his visit to the heavily damaged city of Ramsgate.13 Apparently carefree, he smiles cheerfully for the camera, a protective steel helmet is strapped around his chin in place of his Homburg.14 Some photos showed him surveying Blitz damage, to assure people that the government cared. A September 1940 photo captioned “Are we downhearted?” portrays Churchill on a wrecked city street, surrounded by grinning young girls and a contingent of resolute military officers.15 Another (page 12) shows him with the King and Queen surveying the rubble of Buckingham Palace.16 Similar is the photo of him in the House of Commons, destroyed in the last raid of the Blitz, captioned: “The stony path we have to tread.” In such photos Churchill might appear grave and serious, but never desperate or hopeless. Their effect was to demonstrate that government figures shared the dire situation as civilians.

Churchill’s effort to present a positive public image was successful. Britons regarded him as a caring leader, confident yet realistic, ready for anything. The morning after the Blitz began, Samuel Battersby, a government official accompanied him on an inspection tour, recalling a teary-eyed Churchill watching as rescuers pulled civilians from the rubble of their homes. When one woman asked him, “When are we going to bomb Berlin?” Churchill ardently replied, “You leave that to me,” raising the spirits of the desperate and confused survivors. The Prime Minister, Battersby recalled, transformed an atmosphere of despondency into one of hope in only a few words.18

Churchill understood how to reach out to civilians, first with sympathy, then by creating confidence. In his own recollections he described how the people looked to him:

“It fell to me in these coming days and months to express their sentiments on suitable occasions.... There was a white glow overpowering, sublime, which ran through our Island from end to end.”

—WSC, Their Finest Hour, 1949

They crowded round us, cheering and manifesting every sign of lively affection, wanting to touch and stroke my clothes. One would have thought I had brought them some fine substantial benefit which would improve their lot in life. I was completely undermined, and wept. Ismay, who was with me, records that he heard an old woman say: “You see, he really cares. He’s crying.” They were tears not of sorrow but of wonder and admiration… . When we got back into the car a harsher mood swept over this haggard crowd. “Give it to ‘em back,” they cried, and “Let them have it too.” I undertook forthwith to see that their wishes were carried out; and this promise was certainly kept.19

Despite all the fame created by his image and high office, Churchill remained humble, regarding his role less as a path to glory than a necessary hardship and responsibility. Victory was the goal—for the nation as a whole.

The Impact of Oratory

Churchill in the war was probably best known for his exceptional oratory. Many years before he had penned an essay, “The Scaffolding of Rhetoric,” to outline the ingredients of a good speech. He had worked to diminish his vocal impediments and improve his voice, studying the speeches of great British politicians, including his father, Lord Randolph Churchill.20 Ascending the political ladder, he gained mastery as a speaker, but his best efforts were often
improvised as he paced around his office or home, at any hour of the day or night, rehearsing. Shorthand secretaries took down his meticulously crafted words and had them typed for further review in a few hours.  

Whether delivered in the Commons, on platforms or at the microphone, Churchill’s speeches were, as his old colleague Arthur Balfour once observed, not “the unpremeditated effusions of a hasty moment.” He took care “to weigh well and balance every word,” creating speeches which were formal literary compositions, dictated in full beforehand, fastidiously revised and polished.  

In public and Parliament, Churchill’s words reached and motivated his countrymen. In 1898 he had said: “I do not care so much for the principles I advocate as for the impression which my words produce and the reputation they give me.” Yet by the time he stepped down as premier in 1945, he had proved that the strong sentiments he wished to convey matched the rhetorical power of his speeches.

On the day Britain declared war on Germany, Churchill gave an empowering speech in Parliament that signaled the beginning of his rise to the pinnacle, stressing the importance of unity, appealing for courage and patriotic sentiments from those around him. Britons had never been so well prepared to take on such a difficult task, he said: “...the wholehearted concurrence of scores of millions...is the only foundation upon which the trial and tribulation of modern war can be endured and surmounted.”

Eight months later as prime minister, his oratory became more powerful, frequent and available. But now he had to prepare the public for “hard and heavy tidings.” His first broadcast as prime minister, promising “Blood, Toil, Tears, and Sweat,” introduced themes that would appear in his speeches over the next year. Again he emphasized unity, and the need for victory at all costs. He ended his speech on a high note, saying, “Come then, let us go forward together with our united strength.”

A few days later in his next broadcast, the theme of the homeland became paramount—the cause worth fighting for. Churchill invoked blatant nationalism: “...there will come the battle for our Island—for all that Britain is, and all that Britain means. That will be the struggle.” He continued by encouraging the people to raise their resolve, declaring that it was far better “to perish in battle than to look upon the outrage of our nation, and our altars.” In the past, only the military had been asked for such devotion; now civilians were asked for it too.

There was no substitute for victory, he declared. Britain had a responsibility to its empire and allies, to the bludgeoned races of Europe. His speech after Dunkirk extended the theme: “We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be.” Band together, he exclaimed: put aside domestic differences, at least for a while: “Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, “This was their finest hour.”

By mid-1940 the population understood that it was likely only a matter of time before the German power was unleashed on them, but they were encouraged by the elaborate military preparations, by the Ministry of Information, and especially by Churchill’s speeches, to resist the aggressor, come what may.

Before the Blitz, themes of the “island home” and “a cause greater than ourselves” were the main focus of Churchill’s speeches. The Battle of Britain (which he named) caused him to warn that the nation’s endurance and patriotism would be seriously tested. On 14 July 1940 he said, “We are fighting by ourselves alone; but we are not fighting for ourselves alone.” Referring to the people as “we” made them feel part of a team working toward the same goal. While Churchill demanded their resolve, he acknowledged the difficulty of the task at hand, even though the war was still many miles away. Entitling one broadcast “War of the Unknown Warriors,” Churchill glorified the contributions of every citizen.

As bombs began to rain down in August, Churchill confessed to Parliament that “it is very painful to me to see >>
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…a small British house or business smashed by the enemy’s fire, and to see that without feeling assured that we are doing our best to spread the burden so that we all stand in together.” Despite efforts to ease the strain of attack, he worried that he had not done enough. Assured, however, by civilian response to the Blitz, Churchill was convinced that the country would survive. Even the King and Queen had felt the effects of the bombing, which demonstrated the equalizing effect of danger.51

Churchill saluted his countrymen: “All the world that is still free marvels at the composure and fortitude with which the citizens of London are facing and surmounting the great ordeal to which they are subjected, the end of which or the severity of which cannot yet be foreseen.”52 Though Churchill had declared, “We Can Take It!,” even he was surprised by the high morale of the people, who acted as if “one had brought some great benefit to them, instead of the blood and tears, the toil and sweat.”53 Although the attacks spread beyond London and lasted many more months, they soon became a part of everyday life that people learned to live with and work around.

Following His Example

Churchill personally made many efforts to boost civilian spirit. Early on he had realized that this war would be not a distant fight but an everyday emergency. When “night and the enemy were approaching,” he felt, “with a spasm of mental pain, a deep sense of the strain and suffering that was being borne throughout the world’s largest capital city” and worried if there was a limit to the suffering civilians would take.54 He was determined to stall dissatisfaction.

Morale was a serious concern as the bombing continued. The Ministry of Information used posters, films, pamphlets, and music to show civilians that the government cared. Other government agencies worked to distract civilians from the discomforts of the siege by providing shelters, covering the Blitz and military efforts abroad. A thorough investigation of the Churchill War Papers and Hansard shows that Churchill was not directly involved in these ministries. Although he commented on their work, they usually functioned as independent entities. He certainly demonstrated concern for projecting an effective public image and for delivering inspiring speeches. Meanwhile he supported every measure he thought would ensure the continuation of popular morale and support.

Once the Blitz had demonstrated that the war was a direct threat to civilian lives, Churchill suggested that the King create medals honoring civilian heroism: the George Medal and George Cross.55 He asked that the BBC play the seven national anthems of the Allies each Sunday.56 Knowing that Britons had a tradition of “gathering round the wireless,” he communicated frequently, beaming broadcasts at the occupied nations as well.57 A BBC listener research survey in February 1941 revealed that nearly two-thirds of respondents thought the news was “100% reliable,” while only one person in 1200 thought it “completely unreliable.”58

To Churchill’s relief, most citizens remained positive and devoted. Instead of inducing self-pity, the Blitz motivated them to defy it. “Many persons seemed envious of London’s distinction,” Churchill reflected later, “and quite a number came up from the country in order to spend a night or two in town, share the risk, and ‘see the fun.’”59 The attitude of ordinary Britons was surprising, considering the desperation of their situation—but reflects in part Churchill’s success as a role model and their own fierce determination.

In October 1940, one month into the Blitz, 80% of the public felt it was “impossible for Germany to win the war solely by air attacks” and 89% said they were behind Churchill’s leadership.60 Rarely did a leader have such an impact on opinion. Even as bombs destroyed landmarks, homes and ships at sea, the British people still believed they would win. It was a time, Churchill wrote,
when the English, and particularly the Londoners, who had the place of honour, were seen at their best. Grim and gay, dogged and serviceable, with the confidence of an unconquered people in their bones, they adapted themselves to this strange new life, with all its terrors, with all its jolts and jars.41

Leading in Parliament

While his rapid creation of a coalition government earned Churchill high marks, some opponents continued to regard him as a pompous blowhard who would not be able to charm the populace. Stanley Baldwin once joked that at his birth, fairies had bestowed Churchill with many talents, yet denied him “judgement and wisdom.”42 To Baldwin Churchill was all words. Was there anything to this petty talk, or was it a case of two tenacious politicians butting heads? But Baldwin rallied to Churchill once war came, and such infighting became almost nonexistent.

Despite a coalition including many of their own leaders, some British radicals took a stance against the government. Oswald Mosley, founder of the British Union of Fascists, was arrested in May 1940 under the Emergency Powers Act. To its credit, the Fascist newsletter *Action* condemned him and called for support of the war effort; but they might also have been considering their own self-interest.43

In 1941 came the People’s Convention: communists and other leftists who met to plan a new government that “would bring peace by negotiating with the German masses, not with their leaders.”44 Rejecting Churchill’s policy of fighting until Hitler had been defeated, these protesters wished to renew the prewar class struggles. Churchill, unconcerned, made no attempt to interfere with the Convention—demonstrating, as The *New York Times* put it, “the Government’s inherent strength, just as the impossibility of such a gathering in Germany, Italy or Russia proves the inherent weakness of the dictatorships.”45

The dissenters were a small minority: 77% of people, when asked, rejected the idea of “making overtures of peace with Germany,” and 82% still thought that “ultimately, Britain would win the war.”46 Under Churchill, the nation was ready to fight to the finish.

The strength of the coalition government contributed to solidarity. The Prime Minister maintained efficient and effective government, with a cabinet representing all parties. Their unity assured public confidence—in stark contrast to Hitler’s Germany, which often resorted to force, intimidation and oppression to buck up popular support. On 19 May 1940, shortly after formation of the new coalition government, the *Evening Standard* ran a David Low cartoon portraying a resolved Churchill leading a contingent of famous politicians, rolling up their sleeves and marching forward: “All Behind You, Winston.”

Churchill was himself pleased by the efficient work of Parliament: “I doubt whether any of the Dictators had as much effective power throughout his whole nation as the British War Cabinet….It was a proud thought that Parliamentary Democracy, or whatever our British public life can be called, can endure, surmount, and survive all trials.”47 Unlike Hitler, Churchill knew the value of a coalition respected by all parties and classes.48

Saving the West

Leading by example had created an inspirational and motivated environment that emphasized realism without resorting to jingoism. Despite the occasional critic, and two votes of no confidence which were defeated overwhelmingly, Churchill pacified his opposition through character and oratory. Some may have still thought—and some historians have argued—that backing away from the Hitler war would have been the better option. But if Churchill had taken that route, Nazism might have prevailed in Europe, delaying a Normandy invasion indefinitely.49 The willingness of the public to follow him into the unknown emphasized his success in leading the country and saving the West—at least until the United States entered the war and Russia had joined the Allies. The poet Patience Strong poignantly >>
The Leader as Communicator... portrayed Churchill’s government:

We know that we can trust them—
for we know they will not fail....
Although the ship of state may roll and rock upon the sea—
They will steer her safely to the ports of Victory.
Many are the perils, and the risks that they must take—
Many are the dangers of the journey they must make.
May they have the favour of the wind and of the tide—
As upon the waters of the unknown seas they ride.
May their hands be strengthened
by the knowledge that we place—
Reliance in their enterprise. God bless them! We shall face—
The future with new confidence in their capacity—
To bring us through the greatest tempest in our history.50

Under Churchill’s leadership, long before the bombing of London and other cities began, Britons were prepared for the worst. They trusted in their government to lead them through the worst with Churchill the unwavering captain of the ship. He led them through their greatest challenge with staunch resolution. No other politician could have achieved so much, for so many.  

Endnotes

6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
21. Ibid., xiv.
22. Ibid., xx.
25. Ibid., 204-06.
26. Ibid., 206-09.
27. Ibid., 218.
28. Ibid, 229.
29. Ibid., 235.
31. Ibid.
33. Ibid., 255.
34. Churchill, Their Finest Hour, 316-17.
37. Mary Dale, letter interview by author, February 2012.
38. Mackay, Half the Battle, 146.
40. Mackay, Half the Battle, 75.
41. Churchill, Their Finest Hour, 316.
42. Buchanan, Churchill, Hitler, 357.
46. Mackay, Half the Battle, 86.
47. Churchill, Their Finest Hour, 315.
The Leader as Imperialist: Churchill and the King’s Other Army

While recognizing the towering nature of Churchill’s accomplishments, it is past time to retrieve from the shadows to which he consigned it the final act of the old Indian Army, without which the British Empire’s last great victory would simply not have been possible.

Churchill understood that India and its army were vital components in British world power, and would have to remain at Britain's disposal if that power were to endure. It was in this spirit that he approached Indian matters during the war. Politics were to be shut down: nothing was to be allowed to interfere with the maximum mobilization of Indian resources to sustain the imperial war effort. Churchill was remarkably successful in sustaining these policies for five years, despite pressure from within his own government, not to mention his American allies....The Indian Army contributed more divisions than Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa combined.

Churchill and the Raj is a difficult subject—and one that he himself largely evaded in his war memoirs. It has yet to draw from historians the scrutiny it deserves. (Of course, sensationalist writers have made absurd charges in relation to the Bengal Famine, but that is not serious history.*) This brief note is certainly not the in-depth study the subject deserves, but rather an exploration of a topic that will have to figure in that study.

From the late 18th century Britain had two armies. There was the regular British army, relatively small and kept that way by problems of finance, recruitment, and the lingering suspicion of a standing army. Then there was the Indian Army, the creation of the East India Company (EIC), free to the British taxpayer, and capable of almost indefinite expansion. It was this second army that became the Empire’s cost-free strategic reserve. From the time the EIC’s sepoys took Manila in 1762, the potent combination of the Royal Navy and the Indian Army projected British power, cheaply and effectively, everywhere in the eastern world from Egypt to China. It was one of the basic facts about Britain’s global power until India’s independence in 1947. But a fact about the era in which Churchill’s views about India were formed is often overlooked. >>

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In 1857 the Bengal Army, the largest of the EIC’s armies—it had three, known collectively as the Indian Army—exploded in mutiny, triggering other revolts. The causes of the “Great Sepoy Mutiny” are too complex to be considered here. It was, however, the greatest challenge the Raj ever faced, and in Britain its suppression was considered an epic saga of British courage and resolve—the most written-about imperial episode of the Victorian era.

In its aftermath, the Crown replaced the EIC as India’s ruler, but the Indian Army remained. The Raj (and much else) could not be sustained without it. But in many British minds a lingering distrust of Sepoy loyalty remained as well—despite the facts that the other two EIC forces, the Madras and the Bombay Armies, remained loyal, and that most of the troops who put down the mutiny/revolt were Indians. It would become clear from subsequent events that Churchill’s was one of those minds.

Churchill’s personal encounter with India as a subaltern in the 4th Hussars did little to give him a nuanced view of the Indian Army. British cavalry officers in his day tended to look down on most of the rest of the British Army. “Black troops”—and their far-from-socially-elite British officers—were beneath their notice.

Churchill’s war reporting from the Northwest Frontier, and the book spun out of it, The Story of the Malakand Field Force (still one of the best accounts of an Indian frontier campaign) displays little real knowledge of the Indian Army. His remarks on the Sikhs are wrong and no other Indian units (which of course contributed the bulk of the force) are accorded any ink—except the Gurkhas, whom he never actually saw in action, but clearly he shared the British love affair with these formidable soldiers.

Once Churchill left India he had only marginal contact with its affairs until the 1930s. This was unfortunate since he had a remarkable capacity for absorbing quantities of information about anything within his official responsibility—and an equally impressive ability to face the realities with which those responsibilities confronted him. As it was, when he again engaged with the Raj—in his vain five-year campaign to derail what became the 1935 Government of India Act—his observations about the Indian Army proved that the ideas of his youth still shaped his views.

The “warrior races” of India, Churchill insisted—and much more in this vein—would never tolerate the rule of the “Hindu priesthood.” In fact the Indian Army was then grappling with “Indianisation”—giving to Indians the King’s commission and thus equality with British officers. This would ultimately transform the Raj profoundly—signal its end, in fact, since an Indian-officered Indian Army would no longer be usable as the Raj’s praetorian guard.

There are varying interpretations of WSC’s motivations in opposing the 1935 Act but one thing is clear: whatever else he may not have known, or may have misinterpreted about India, he understood that it and its army were absolutely vital components of British world power, and would have to remain at Britain’s disposal if that power were to endure.

I t was in this spirit that Churchill approached Indian matters during the war. Politics were to be shut down, and no further political concessions offered. Above all nothing was to be allowed to interfere with the maximum mobilization of Indian resources to sustain the imperial war effort. He was remarkably successful in sustaining these policies for five years, despite pressure from within his own government, not to mention his American allies.

Meanwhile the Indian Army grew from some 180,000 in 1939 to 2.5 million in 1945—history’s largest voluntarily enlisted force. It was vital to the British war effort from the Mediterranean and the Middle East to Burma.

The Indian Army contributed more divisions than Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa combined. At war’s end the British Eighth Army in Italy comprised not only New Zealand and South African divisions but three Indian divisions (and two of Poles). The “British” 14th Army in Burma was nearly 70% Indian and only 13% British (African troops outnumbered British in that “Forgotten Army”). It was 14th Army, under the command of an Indian Army officer, General Sir William Slim, which won in 1944-45 the war’s greatest victory of operational maneuver under the British flag.

The Indian Army’s war was fought in an equipment-poor environment (in contrast to the lavish support enjoyed by Montgomery in North Africa and Europe). It also never enjoyed any of the esteem that the Prime Minister bestowed on Monty, Alexander and the armies they commanded. In 1941 General Sir Claude Auchinleck, an Indian Army officer who had just moved from Commander-in-Chief, India to command the Middle East theater, pressed Churchill for more equipment for the expanding Indian Army (which was at that point raising armored divisions without having a single modern tank). Churchill’s response was to ask whether, if given modern weaponry, Indian soldiers would point their guns in the right direction.

In May 1943, the PM berated Auchinleck’s successor in India, Sir Archibald Wavell, about the Indian Army’s failure in loyalty—in 1857. He constantly brushed aside the efforts of Leo Amery, his Secretary of State for India and Burma, to inform him about the realities of the Indian Army’s war. He picked up a phrase from Orde Wingate (a controversial British regular officer who caught WSC’s imagination in 1943 and was, consequently, advanced well beyond his professional merits): the Indian Army was merely a system of “outdoor relief”—i.e., a method of distributing welfare payments. He was still hurling the phrase at Amery in the spring of 1945 as Bill Slim’s great—and overwhelmingly Indian—14th Army was winding up a campaign that led a recent conference at Britain’s National Army Museum to
rank Slim with Marlborough and Wellington as one of Britain’s greatest generals. (Incidentally, Montgomery failed to make the cut.)

This is a sad story of unshakeable mistrust and disdain, and what makes it even stranger is that the Prime Minister clung to his prejudices in the face of striking evidence to the contrary. With British prestige battered by six months of catastrophic defeat, in August, 1942, Gandhi launched his “Quit India” movement, which quickly turned into an insurrection, the “Congress Revolt”—the greatest challenge the Raj had faced since 1857. At that moment there was one complete British field force division in all of India. The revolt was put down largely by Indian troops, including new recruits, many commanded by newly commissioned Indian junior officers. It is hard to imagine a greater testimonial to the Indian Army’s institutional strength—or a more definitive refutation of Churchill’s doubts about its loyalty. Yet it seems to have made no difference to his views.

Churchill left office in July 1945. Twenty-five months later, the British Raj came to an end. One of the factors that hastened that end was the transformation of the Indian Army. The only way to provide officers for a 2.5 million man army was to commission Indians—lots of them. In 1939, only about 400 of the Indian Army’s 5000 officers were Indians (all of them subalterns or captains). In 1945 the figure stood at 14,000—a third of the officer corps, many of them field grade, combat-experienced and decorated. Already in 1942, Indian Army headquarters had recognized that the expectations of its Indian officers were for postwar independence. The rapid termination of the Raj had multiple causes, but one of the most important—and least studied—was the momentous change in the Indian Army, an ironic consequence of Churchill’s (and Britain’s) commitment to total victory.

In an astonishing burst of energy and creativity, Churchill produced most of his six volumes of war memoirs between his defeat at the polls in 1945 and his October 1951 return to Downing Street. In those volumes he shaped a vision of the war that dominated its discussion for a generation and remains very influential to this day. The Indian Army is largely absent. There is no recognition of the scale of the Indian military contribution or its critical role in the Middle East, North Africa and Italy. Britain’s war against Japan, largely sustained by the Indian Army, is particularly slighted. The chapters dealing with Burma were drafted by the author’s military assistant, Lieutenant General Sir Henry Pownall, and were notable for the absence of the Indian Army, as such. It took protests from British veterans of the 14th Army, conveyed personally to Churchill by Slim (by then Chief of the Imperial General Staff) to get coverage in the final volume of the great 1944-45 campaign that reconquered Burma. Churchill spent more time on America’s Pacific campaign than he did on the army that made it possible for Britain to wage global war.

Why? Racism has been suggested as an explanation, but that is much too simple. Churchill certainly, as Geoffrey Best has observed, believed that white Europeans (and their offspring about the globe) had reached a higher level of development than others; but that was the dominant view of his generation (and remains alive today, albeit disguised, often quite thinly). Only by retrospectively and anachronistically applying our standards to him can we call him a racist (although he could say some quite unpleasant things).

The explanation of Churchill’s attitude toward the Indian Army lies, I believe, elsewhere: in faulty historical memories, class attitudes and his vision of empire. In his youth he absorbed the prevalent (and inaccurate) beliefs, born of the 1857 Mutiny, about the questionable reliability of Indian soldiers and their absolute dependence on British leadership. As a young man he also acquired the social and professional disdain that officers of the regular British Army (especially its “good” regiments) felt for the non-elite British officers of the Indian Army and the soldiers they commanded. Nothing thereafter was allowed to disturb these convictions. Then there was his absolutely correct belief that the Raj was essential to British global power and his anguish at the possibility of losing India. It was all too painful to contemplate beforehand—or write about afterwards.

Even the finest leaders have blind spots. India and its army were perhaps the greatest of Churchill’s. While recognizing the towering nature of his accomplishments, it is past time to retrieve from the shadows to which he consigned it the astonishing final act of the old Indian Army, without which the British Empire’s last great victory would simply not have been possible. ☞
The Leader as Historian

“I have an announcement to make to the House pertaining to the Treaty signed between this country and Portugal in the year 1373 between His Majesty King Edward III and King Ferdinand and Queen Eleanor of Portugal.”

HOUSE OF COMMONS, 12 OCTOBER 1943—Members of Parliament were startled, but some of those familiar with the prime minister smiled. Churchill the historian had expected the reaction: “I spoke in a level voice, and made a pause to allow the House to take in the date, 1373. As this soaked in there was something like a gasp.” The prime minister had just invoked the oldest active treaty in the world.

Churchill went on to report that based on the 570-year-old agreement the United Kingdom had requested, and Portugal had agreed, that His Majesty’s Government be accorded certain facilities in key islands of the Azores to protect merchant shipping in the Atlantic. Recalling the announcement in his war memoirs, he added: “I do not suppose any such continuity of relations between two Powers has ever been, or will ever be, set forth in the ordinary day-to-day work of British diplomacy.”

Churchill’s wartime invocation of the ancient Anglo-Portuguese Alliance is best understood in light of the political and military state of affairs between the United Kingdom and Portugal, at the time an authoritarian regime under António de Oliveira Salazar.

The old treaty was no less ignored in Lisbon. Expecting an imminent British declaration of war on Germany, Portugal had sent London a note on 1 September 1939. It confirmed that the Anglo-Portuguese Alliance, which had established a pact of mutual support between the countries, remained intact, but stated that since London did not seek Lisbon’s assistance, Portugal would remain neutral. The Foreign Office confirmed Portugal’s declaration of neutrality in an aide-mémoire on September 5th. From a military perspective, Britain hoped that Portuguese neutrality would prevent the war from expanding into the Iberian Peninsula.

During 1940-41, Salazar used diplomatic efforts, and his relationship with Spain’s dictator, General Francisco Franco, to prevent Spain from entering the war on the side of the Axis, which some, given Germany’s aid to Franco in the recent Spanish Civil War, considered a likely possibility. By his actions Salazar sought to avoid Portugal being invaded by Spain or the Germans.

On 24 September 1940, Churchill wrote Salazar to thank him for his efforts, referring to the old alliance: “I have followed with greatest sympathy and admiration the efforts you have made to prevent war from spreading to the Iberian Peninsula. As so often during the many centuries of the Anglo-Portuguese Alliance, British and Portuguese interests are identical on this vital question.”

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Three years later, the position had changed. Britain was in the midst of the Battle of the Atlantic, striving to break the grip of Germany’s U-boats on vital shipping from North America. Churchill understood that until the U-boats were destroyed, it would be impossible to engage in the enormous transport operations required before assailing Hitler’s Fortress Europe. Specifically, Churchill and President Roosevelt agreed that the Portuguese Azores would give the Anglo-Americans a base to cover the “Mid-Atlantic Gap,” an undefended zone beyond the reach of Britain’s Coastal Command aircraft, which had seen an ominous rise in merchant shipping losses.

The importance of the Azores to the Allies was clear to all, but there was a difference of opinion on how to secure them. The British Foreign Office wanted to use diplomatic efforts; Churchill, Roosevelt and their Combined Chiefs of Staff wanted to occupy the islands militarily before the Germans did. But the military timetable changed, and on 11 June 1943, Churchill advised the President that his military advisers had informed him that the Azores could not be occupied until the end of August. This development gave diplomacy another chance. Sir Ronald Hugh Campbell, British Ambassador to Portugal, suggested that Salazar, who wished to avoid Anglo-American military occupation of the islands, might be open to granting access to them. Campbell was long recognized for his outstanding negotiation skills: he had been Ambassador to Paris until France fell in June 1940, had returned to London, and took up his post in Lisbon the following November.

The opportunity presented by Campbell to negotiate for peaceful occupation of the Azores appealed to Churchill’s sense of history. In staff discussions, the Prime Minister suggested that Salazar might agree if Britain invoked the 1373 Treaty, Article I of which was encouraging:

In the first place we settle and covenant that there shall be from this day forward…true and faithful, constant, mutual and perpetual friendships, unions, alliances and needs of sincere affection, and that as true and faithful friends we shall henceforth, reciprocally, be friends to friends and enemies to enemies, and shall assist, maintain and uphold each other mutually, by sea and by land, against all men that may live or die.

The historian in Churchill also knew there was a precedent for invoking the old alliance. In 1807 Napoleon, having declared war on Britain, had delivered an ultimatum to Portugal, demanding that Portuguese ports be closed to British shipping. Portugal had refused, citing the 1373 Treaty, and the Portuguese Royal Family, aware of the likely consequences, had fled to Brazil, escorted by the British fleet. Napoleon and his French army had duly invaded Portugal and captured Lisbon. But Britain had come to Portugal’s aid in 1808, and the six-year Peninsular War against France had culminated in the defeat of Napoleon. Likewise, a century later, Portugal had joined the Western Allies in World War I, where, at the Battle of Lys in Flanders, the Portuguese suffered 7000 casualties.

While Churchill was sure the 1373 Treaty would form the basis of agreement in 1943, he understood that negotiations were required, and Ronald Campbell was ideal for the job. After three months of discussions, Great Britain was accorded airfield and naval facilities in the Azores. The Portuguese agreed to grant use of the Azores to the UK immediately, while the British promised essential material and supplies to the Portuguese armed forces. The agreement was acknowledged as temporary, and in no way affecting Portuguese sovereignty. British forces would be withdrawn at the end of hostilities, and the agreement also recognized Portugal’s continued neutrality.

After Churchill’s address to the Commons, American monitors in Berlin reported German reactions to the U.S. Office of War Information. While Berlin did not condemn Portugal’s action, it declared that Lisbon “obviously agreed to these concessions under strong British and United States pressure.” Meanwhile, the German news agency reported that the German Consulate on the Azores was being closed and German nationals were leaving the islands.

On October 13th, the day after Churchill’s announcement, President Roosevelt told his radio press conference that a decision to seek Portuguese agreement for bases in the Azores was reached at conferences between himself and Churchill in Washington the previous May. The agreement was made by Britain, he explained, in view of the 14th century Anglo-Portuguese Treaty. Otherwise the U.S. would have joined with Britain in seeking Azores facilities. Would American forces also use the bases? Roosevelt explained that Britain and the United States were allies which, in prosecuting the war, frequently conducted joint operations. In emergencies, he added, the U.S. might use Azores bases to protect American lives.

Two weeks after British forces arrived in the Azores, anti-submarine aircraft began operating. British Lancasters, Yorks and Wellingtons, and American Hudson and Flying Fortress bombers flew attack patrols in a 500-mile radius around the islands. The first U-boat kill came on 9 November 1943. Fifty-two more followed, dramatically reducing Allied shipping losses. On 9 December, the first American heavy bomber, a B-17, passed through in what was to be a “limited number” of flights via the Azores.

Thus Churchill’s leadership and knowledge of history materially aided the Allied War effort by invoking the oldest active treaty in the world. While we can picture the consternation or amusement in the House of Commons when the prime minister made his surprising announcement, we may also appreciate his resourcefulness and mastery of history. Although the Anglo-Portuguese Alliance may be only a footnote in the annals of World War II, it is another outstanding example of his wartime leadership that helped >>
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defeat Nazi Germany.
Churchill’s wartime use of the Alliance also affected future British policy. For example, during the 1982 Falklands War, the facilities of the Azores were once again requested by Britain for use by the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force. Portugal granted the request on the same basis that it had for Churchill thirty-nine years earlier.

**Endnotes**

2. Ibid., 147.
5. Telegram from WSC to President Roosevelt marked “Most Secret and Personal,” 11 June 1943. Churchill Archives Centre, CHAR 20/112/94-95.

**Oxford, 1936: Force and Clarity**

*Edward Heath, Prime Minister (1970-74)*

Winston Churchill came to support his close friend and scientific adviser Professor Frederick Lindemann, who was standing as the Conservative candidate in a by-election for the University seat.…[He] stressed the urgent need for Britain to rearm. When he added that the University required a definite and Conservative set of principles, rather than a wishy-washy set of opinions, he was applauded enthusiastically. Afterwards Lindemann took Churchill and three others, including me, back to his rooms in Christ Church for a nightcap. There we sat on the floor by the fire listening to the great man expounding his views over a series of whiskies. It was the first time I had met Churchill, and I was struck not only by the force and clarity of his arguments, but by his sheer presence. He also reinforced my determination to help articulate and later implement a new brand of Conservatism. Around two in the morning he patted the side of his chair and declared, “It is time I went off to that ducal palace.” So off he went to stay at Blenheim with his cousin, the Duke of Marlborough, leaving us to talk our way back into college long after the gates were locked, and then explain ourselves to the dean the next day.


**Chartwell, 1939: Always Rehearsing**

*Robin Maugham, Novelist*

I [had] become private secretary to Sir Herbert Morgan who had just been appointed Director of the National Service Campaign….National Service, I soon realized, was being stifled by the incompetence of the top office and slowed down by the red tape in the various ministries concerned with it. After a few months I wrote a memorandum on the subject. My memorandum had a success. Soon it was suggested that the full inside story of the incompetence in Whitehall should be told to a politician who could be guaranteed not to make it a party issue, and who could be relied upon to appreciate the seriousness of our poor recruiting figures. The man chosen was Mr. Winston Churchill….I arrived punctually at Chartwell at half past three, and I was shown into Churchill’s study where he sat smoking a cigar with a soda siphon on one side of him and a bottle of whisky on the other. “Have some whisky,” he suggested. “We’ll have tea later.” I gave him a copy of my memorandum, sipped my drink cautiously and

GLIMPSES

**The Leader Encountered**

**Compiled by Dana Cook**

Mr. Cook (danacook@istar.ca) has widely published collections of literary, political and show business encounters, including the first installment of this column in *FH* 147.
told him the secret problems of the National Service Campaign. He listened intently....As I drove away from Chartwell, suddenly Mr. Churchill appeared at an upper window of the house. He seemed to be declaring some speech. I had already said goodbye and the car had begun to drive away, so that his words may well have become inaudible—or perhaps as a result of my later head injury I have forgotten them. But in my mind I see him clearly, his hand uplifted at the window.

—Escape from the Shadows (1972)

**Ditchley, Oxford, 1940s: Total Dedication**

*David Niven*, *Actor*

I arrived in uniform just in time for dinner....We were twenty in number and just as we were about to sit down, Churchill spotted me from the far end of the table. I had heard before that he was an ardent movie-goer but I was unprepared for what was to come. He marched the whole length of the dining room and shook me by the hand.

“Young man,” he growled, “you did a very fine thing to give up a most promising career to fight for your country.” I was conscious that the great and the near-great in the room had remained standing and were listening with interest. I stammered some inane reply and Churchill continued with a twinkle, “Mark you, had you not done so—it would have been despicable!” He marched back to his seat.

After church on Sunday, Churchill requisitioned me for a walk round the walled garden. He talked at great length about vegetables and the joy of growing one’s own. He made it clear that before long, rationing would become so severe that “every square inch of our island will be pressed into service.” He questioned me about the problems of a junior officer in the Army and listened most attentively to my answers.

—The Moon’s a Balloon: Reminiscences (1971)

**Harvard, 1943: Historical Consciousness**

*Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., Historian*

The great British prime minister, after a meeting with Roosevelt in Washington, had come to Cambridge to receive an honorary degree, and as a break in the day’s round of formalities he asked President Conant to arrange a half hour or so with some Harvard historians. Puffing a huge cigar and seeming utterly relaxed, he could not have been more affable; but it soon developed that his mind was less on times gone by than on the history he himself was helping to make, and in us of course he possessed avid listeners....He added, with a sort of smile, that he personally would not be satisfied unless Hitler met death in the electric chair, since the truly great figures of history had lost their lives by hanging or the guillotine and only gangsters and criminals by electrocution. He talked with such evident unrestraint that he appeared to admit us to his innermost confidence. We, of course, should have known better.

—In Retrospect: The History of an Historian (1963)

**Hampshire, 1944: Zest for Battle**

*General Maxwell Taylor, U.S. Army*

We had many visitors during the final weeks of our preparations, the most notable being Prime Minister Churchill accompanied by General Eisenhower at the end of March. The Division put on a demonstration parachute jump for the visitors in the afternoon, and the Prime Minister and Eisenhower reciprocated with a dinner on board their special train for the American division commanders stationed in that part of England. Churchill was just getting up from a nap when we arrived at the train, and he appeared tired and a bit grumpy. However, drinks were soon passed, and he seized upon a large glass of cognac. Soon the color was back in his jowls and the sparkle in his eyes. He began to reminisce about the Boer War, and by the time dinner was served, he had us in the midst of World War I. He remained in superb form throughout the evening, keeping us early-rising soldiers well beyond our normal bedtime.

—Swords and Ploughshares: A Memoir (1972)

**London, 1945: Holding Forth**

*Cecil Beaton*, *Photographer*

Standing in the centre of the drawing-room...I watched Churchill holding, in his feminine hands with pointed nails and fingers, a glass of champagne too near his face so that the exploding bubbles tickled him and, like a baby, he screwed up his nose and eyes to display an almost toothless mouth. He wore cracked patent-leather shoes, and his stomach was high-pitched under an immaculate shirt, and his heavy gold watch chain was like my father’s. He was very much the star of the evening. He has much of the “show-off” about him and does not brook with equanimity rival attractions or interruption. Several times during dinner he growled: “Allow me to continue this discussion,” or: “Please don’t interrupt, Clemmie,” and indeed he knew his performance warranted rapt attention. I realized to what a degree all in his family circle must pay him deference. But, in all fairness, he was strictly truthful, well-balanced and impartial.

—Diaries 1944-48: The Happy Years (1972)
It became his symbol, his salute, his hallmark, his talisman. He did not invent it. He just turned it inside out and cleaned it up.

As a former soldier—and indeed as a former Harrow schoolboy—Churchill knew early on that the original gesture, knuckles facing out, had for more than 500 years been used around the world as a crude expression of disrespect, insolence, defiance and vulgarity.

It has been said that when wars were fought by soldiers armed with bows and arrows, after an archer had emptied his quiver he would continue to raise his first two fingers—as if to draw back his now-impotent bow string—in a gesture of contempt and provocation towards the enemy. Churchill was careful (mostly) to give his version of the V-sign with the knuckles facing in. The gesture was to acquire a whole new meaning—defiance, yes, but also hope, determination and victory—and was to go down in history not only as the trademark of the man but a symbol of the resolution of a whole nation.

When did Churchill first use the V-sign? His son Randolph, in his documentary Churchill: His Life in Photographs (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1955) writes in the caption to picture 203: “Shortly after his return from the United States [he meant Newfoundland] the Prime Minister...gives the first of his innumerable and famous V-signs—August 1941.” But two weeks earlier, before WSC left for Placentia Bay, the Daily Express captioned a photograph: “The V-sign: this novel salute made by the prime minister at the conclusion of his interview.”

Let us not quibble over a fortnight. Churchill was first seen to use the V-sign in August 1941. It did not gain immediate acceptance. Jock Colville wrote in his diary-memoir, The Fringes of Power, of Churchill’s visit to Coventry in September 1941: “The PM will give the V-sign with two fingers in spite of the representations made to him that this gesture has quite another significance.”

But Churchill persisted and, brushing aside all objections, thereafter used it frequently and extensively. As often as not it was returned with great joy and enthusiasm. It became the symbol of the “V for Victory” campaign.

The publishers of Andrew Roberts’ Churchill: Embattled Hero (1995) picked their cover illustration from the Hulton Deutsch Collection—one of the rare “knuckles out” variety and, I suspect, deliberately chosen to match the author’s text, which responded to attacks by Churchill critics.
LEFT: In 1942 the V-sign was immortalised in china by Ernest Bailey's amusing little “V for Victory” toby jug for Burgess and Leigh of Burslem. Occasionally Churchill forgot himself (or perhaps not!) and delivered his V-sign with knuckles out. In the vast Churchill photographic archive there are no more than a handful of examples where he has been caught with his hand inside out and, often in such cases, he has the sort of expression on his face which suggests that the reversal of his hand may not have been inadvertent.

RIGHT: The fame of the V-sign spread to Spain, and in the 1980s the Sureda Pottery produced this otherwise totally inaccurate figure of Churchill. The uniform appears to be a bad attempt at Churchill’s RAF Honorary Air Commodore attire, but the head is all wrong, and we are glad they added a name to the plinth, which at least tells us what they were trying to do.

ABOVE: Staffordshire Fine Ceramics of Tunstall, who export some 80% of their products, mostly to the USA, claim to be the world’s leading producer of collector teapots. Well, if you fancy pouring out your tea through Winston Churchill’s finger...

LEFT: Staffsordshire Fine Ceramics of Tunstall, who export some 80% of their products, mostly to the USA, claim to be the world’s leading producer of collector teapots. Well, if you fancy pouring out your tea through Winston Churchill’s finger...

LEFT: This 50th anniversary of VE-Day commemorative mug, backstamped simply “STL England,” is captioned, “Prime Minister Winston Churchill giving his familiar V for Victory sign during World War II.” It is one of literally hundreds to portray the standard iconic image, no doubt furnished blank and to souvenir manufacturers for decoration.

BELOW: John Tarns of Longton, one of many potteries marking the 50th anniversary of VE-Day, depicted Churchill giving the “vulgar salute.” I rang to ask whether their illustration was deliberate. They replied that they supplied white blank mugs and were, er, unable to trace the particular producer....
The Leader as Visionary:
Will There Be War? (1937)

The conventional image of Churchill in the 1930s is of a lonely Cassandra, warning of the storm to come. Yet at the same time, he was still searching for ways to preserve peace—in this case through rapprochement with Italy and collective security in the League of Nations.

The Coronation is over. A new King and Queen are seated upon their thrones amid the acclamations of the British people. The Abdication has been digested. The Duke of Windsor is married according to his resolve and with the good wishes of all that is decent in Britain.

After a period of pageantry and of domestic stress the British public may be invited to turn their attention again to Europe. How has it all gone in Europe while we have been thinking about our own affairs? I, personally, have never been able to forget Europe. It hangs over my mind like a vulture.

How are we going to prevent our happy, peaceful, free, progressive life from being destroyed by what may happen in Europe? All the time the German armament hammers have been descending. All the time the great flow of destructive weapons has been passing from the factories to fighting units of brave, virile, competent men improving in their training month by month. All the time the German Army has been increasing its numbers above those of the French Army. All the time the efficiency and ripeness of the German Officer-Corps has been improving. All the time the German Air Force in quantity and in quality has been gaining on our British effort.

It is curious that Parliament, which a year ago showed itself genuinely concerned about our defences, has now forgotten even that there could be such a fact as danger. Some say, "How right the Government were to not be alarmed by the scaremongers! How right they were not to have a Ministry of Supply, and not to upset the ordinary business prosperity of the country! A whole year has passed and nothing has happened. How stultified are those who cried 'Alarm!'" But this complacent movement may soon be stirred by less comfortable reflections. What is the precise character of the arrangements between Germany and Italy? Here are these two Dictators seated on their thrones high above the common mass of peaceful, well-disposed, heavily-burdened mankind. Both have plenty of obedient men. Both are hard pressed for money. Both have to ask their obedient men to tighten their belts.

Both are confronted with the awkward sense that though Germany is all for Hitler, it wishes to be known as Germany; and though Italy is all for Mussolini, it would like to be known as Italy.

Both are disquieted by the fact that large sections of their population would like to stand in with the general efflorescence of the world, and that quite large numbers of Fascists and Nazis would be very much inclined to vote "that a good time should be had by all." Grim Dictators glowing over gaunt populations! What are their personal relations to be?

Secret Clause

At the hub of any Berlin-Rome axis there grits the Italian neutrality at the outbreak of the Great War and the Italian junction with the Allies nine months thereafter.

There is a good deal to be said about this, and not all by

First published as “The Rome-Berlin Axis” in the Evening Standard, 11 June 1937; republished as “Will There Be War?” in Answers, 13 November 1937; first published in volume form in Step by Step (1939); text from the 1947 Odhams edition. Published by kind permission of the Churchill Literary Estate, Randolph S. Churchill and Curtis Brown Ltd., London. Note: Churchill used the “vulture” expression many times since a huge one shadowed him during his escape from the Boer prison in 1899.
any means on one side. The Triple Alliance bound Italy to make war in common with Germany and Austria. But by a secret article known only to the highest authorities in Germany and Austria, Italy had stipulated for the right in all circumstances to stand out of any war in which she would be the enemy of England.

This article was unknown to the British Government, and only became public property after Italy had actually entered the ranks of the Allies.

**German Distrust**

It is the supreme justification of Italian honour—certainly it covers entirely the Italian abstention from declaring war in unison with the other two powers of the Triiplice. No German can preserve a quarrel with Italy on that account.

Far more questionable to German eyes was the action of Italy in declaring war upon Austria and later upon Germany in the Spring of 1915. This was regarded throughout Germany as a base betrayal of solemn obligation. Anyhow, one may say that Italian good faith in the hour of dire need is profoundly distrusted in Germany. We cannot doubt the fact that British and Italian relations have not improved as was hoped in the early months of this year. Signor Mussolini affronted the Liberal and religious forces in Britain when he subjugated the Abyssinians. He infuriated the Socialist-Labour element as well as the Liberals when he made his intrusion into Spain. He disturbed the Conservatives, who are his only friends, when, seated on his white charger, he proclaimed himself the protector of Islam.

Our King-Emperor reigns over more Mohammedans than can be found in the rest of the world. All the British military and Conservative classes have a profound historic liking for the Turk. They fought the Turk with extreme reluctance. But now the relations between Great Britain and Turkey are better than they have ever been before.

Also in India the Mohammedans, confronted with the violent Communist politics of some elements of the Congress party, look to the Imperial power as their true focus.* Therefore great offence was caused, though little was said, when Signor Mussolini declared himself the protector of Islam, he having only a handful of Islam in his control, and that part by no means contented. On the other hand,

googing to marshal adequate and if possible overwhelming forces against brazen, unprovoked aggression, except by a grand alliance of peace-seeking peoples under the authority of an august international body?

One is astonished to hear the vain talk and chatter that proceeds in certain social and political circles in London against the League of Nations. Only by a European union spreading gradually to a world union against war can the dreaded catastrophe, which nevertheless approaches inch by inch and day by day, be warded off.

**Alliance for Peace**

I hold that at the present time an alliance of an offensive or even of a defensive character between Italy and Germany is far from being achieved. There is still time to build Europe into a better framework. There is still time to conciliate existing grievances. There is still time, if all friendly efforts for peace are futile, to forge and weld a grand alliance for international law and justice, which will arrest armaments, avert war and confound the wicked of every land.  

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*This word was revised to “foundation” in Step by Step.

**Haile Selassie (1892-1975), Emperor of Ethiopia 1930-74.
The Leader as Advocate: How Churchill Influences and Persuades

LESLIE HORE-BELISHA

The Rt. Hon. Isaac Leslie Hore-Belisha (1893-1957), First Baron Hore-Belisha (1954), was a Liberal and National Liberal Member of Parliament for Plymouth Devonport from 1923 to 1945. In September 1939, as Secretary of State for War, he became Churchill’s colleague in the Neville Chamberlain War Cabinet. In January 1940 he was sacked by Chamberlain as a divisive influence, although some thought the reason was anti-Semitism, or even the King’s disapproval over his supporting Edward VIII in the Abdication crisis. Churchill appointed him Minister for National Insurance in the brief 1945 Caretaker government. By then a Conservative, he was defeated for reelection by Labour’s Michael Foot. This article excerpted from his chapter by the same title in Churchill by His Contemporaries, edited by Charles Eade (London: Hutchinson, 1953).

I met Winston Churchill when I was a boy of ten, at my uncle’s house in Manchester in 1904. I had heard my uncle—a prominent Liberal in the area—talk about him as the classic proponent of Free Trade, on which Churchill had left the Conservative Party for the Liberals. From then onward I followed everything he did. I watched the papers for his speeches; I scanned the pictures of his latest dress. To my mother’s consternation I even went so far as to buy—and wear in private—a large winged collar. Thus the imagination of a small boy was captured.

I heard him speak again many years later at the Oxford Union when I was an undergraduate. I noticed that he had taken trouble to become the master of his case. I was also struck by his self-assurance. Later I heard from one of the dons with whom he had dined earlier that he had been highly apprehensive over the prospect of addressing undergraduates, though no one would have suspected that he had any fears about his speech, his audience, or the outcome of the debate. A self-confident manner is often a mask which conceals internal terror, as I myself know well.

Since that early period I have come to know him more closely. We sat in the House of Commons together for many years. I have watched him from one angle or another in his years of promise, in his years of ministerial achievement, in his bitter years of isolation, and in his supreme moments as war leader and an architect of victory.

What is the secret of Sir Winston’s remarkable ability to impress, persuade and dominate, in his speeches, in conversation, in committee, in the Cabinet itself? Firstly, I think, one must recognise that Churchill naturally, and without apparent effort, looks and behaves like somebody important. He is “news” and looks news. Throughout his political career, whether in opposition or in government, he has always been in the forefront. In appearance, in manner, in dress and, above all, in speech, he is an individualist.

He gets the last ounce out of the English language, his unique command of which is one of his most persuasive gifts, by his characteristic modulations of voice and by his defiantly Anglo-Saxon pronunciation of foreign words. When he spoke of the “Narrzeees,” for instance, the very lengthening of the word carried with it his message of contempt. By these means he can, when he wishes, make not only every phrase but every word significant.

His unusual hats, which startled the public fancy in his early years, have given place to the cigar, an equally precious gift to the cartoonist. Perhaps such foibles call attention to
himself. But what of his V-sign? There we have his knack of evoking a patriotic emotion. It is a gesture of genius.

But all that is spectacular, showing that an appeal can be addressed to the eye as well as to the ear. More fundamental is his meticulous study of the subject under discussion. With care and patience he builds up a case. First he reads every document to be found on the subject, and with Churchill to read is to remember.

Few have a greater capacity for assimilating facts. I have never known him to go into a conference with an ill-prepared or half-digested case. He knows when he enters a cabinet or committee meeting what he wants done. He has a scheme, a plan, a solution. Not for him the patient hearing while others sort out their views. He takes the initiative with his own proposal for others to support or, if so inclined, to attack. Many eminent statesmen, after listening to all sides of a case and carefully weighing the pros and cons, only then, and in a judicial manner, decide on a course of action. Balfour and Asquith were in this category.

But one would have an entirely wrong impression of Churchill if one visualised him only as a student of briefs and books and a protagonist of theoretical opinions. He believes in seeing for himself, and he has never lost that boyish characteristic of asking "how it works." He enjoined on me in my own ministerial career not merely to accept advice but "always see for yourself. Once you have seen a thing working, you know how it works."

Throughout his life he has followed this "see for yourself" practice. As a young soldier he went off to Cuba because, at that time, it was the only place where there was real fighting. As Home Secretary in 1910-11 he startled his political associates by going almost into the firing line in the "Battle of Sidney Street." His top hat glistened among the policemen’s helmets. (See Christopher Harmon, "Anarchism and Fire," FH 150.) As Prime Minister in war he took every opportunity of visiting the battlefronts, the munition factories, the airfields, the bomb-ruined houses of the people. It was all part of his method of getting to know the facts at first hand. Even the wall he built himself at Chartwell is a reflection of that part of his plan of life.

For the same reason he likes having models made of things that specially interest him. During the early part of the Second World War he had an idea for a machine for tunnelling underground to burrow beneath fortifications. So he had a model made, and having studied its possibilities he asked me to go the Admiralty and see it. His aim was to break the stalemate of position warfare, just as he had hoped to do in the First World War with the tank.

He always has a fresh and original approach to an old problem, often by introducing some new device or gadget. On this plane are his siren suit and his shoes which do up with zip fasteners instead of laces. I remember an occasion when I had lost a most important bunch of keys. Churchill heard about it and told me that he had once had the same misfortune. But, he added, it could never happen again, so far as he was concerned, because he now kept his keys on the ends of a thick, silver, snake-like chain. This chain, he explained, went round his back, threaded through the sides of his braces [suspenders] and the bunches of keys at either end rested safely in his trouser pockets. They could not be lost. After telling me all this he went one better and had a similar chain made for me, which I still have. I have not lost my keys since!

Graphs and maps likewise appeal to his visual imagination and they are often included in his armoury when he is presenting a case. When he was a critic of the government during the late 1930s I first learned of his interest in such things. He was advocating the use of the rocket in anti-aircraft warfare and he showed me diagrams to illustrate its ballistic characteristics. On the wall of my room at the War Office was a map of Europe, which impressed him. He liked to stand with his hands on his hips looking at it and discussing the problems of the future. I gave him this map and he hung it in his study at Chartwell.

His quest for knowledge is facilitated by innumerable contacts in all spheres of our national life. There was never a man with more sources of information. In the course of his career he has become Honorary Bencher of Gray’s Inn, Chancellor of Bristol University, Honorary Academician Extraordinary of the Royal Academy, Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and of the Royal College of Surgeons, Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society, Fellow of the Society of Engineers, Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architecture, Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, Fellow of the Institute of Journalists, Fellow of the Zoological Society, Honorary Member of Lloyd’s, and so on; the list seems endless. In addition he is Hon. Colonel of several regiments, Hon. Air Commodore, and an Elder Brother of Trinity House. Far outside the range of Government Departments and Civil Servants do his antennae stretch.

He has a peculiar sensitivity of what is happening in the world and little escapes him. He does not wait until breakfast-time to read the morning newspapers, but often sends for them during the night when they come off the press. I have a vivid recollection of seeing him frequently in the Smoking Room in the House of Commons absorbed in the early editions of the evening newspapers. Only when he has finished reading them is he prepared to talk.

In his power to influence and persuade Churchill has another great asset—his dogged determination. If he cannot win his way in an argument he will probably propose the adjournment of the meeting to another day, when he will appear with weightier evidence, facts and >>
**The Leader as Advocate...**

In an analysis of the sources of his power and influence it would be impossible to overestimate his tremendous capacity for work, which is enhanced by an equal capacity for relaxation. With him this takes the form not of idleness but of a change of occupation. While his brain is at work, I have often noticed he has a singular facility of resting his body. He will, for instance, do much of his reading and writing propped up in bed.

Churchill is a tough opponent. He is conscious of his strength, and is not reluctant to let his adversary of the moment realise his confidence. I remember once being engaged in a controversy with him and he had hit me pretty hard. Then in conversation he said, “If you attack me I shall strike back and, remember, while you have a 3.7-inch gun I have a 12-inch gun.” This was a reference to the fact that he was prime minister, with all the authority of his position, whereas I was a critic. He gave his warning with a twinkle in his eye but I knew that he meant business. I gamely went into action, but it was not long before his high explosives and shrapnel were falling all around me.

This reminds me that he conceives argument almost as a military art, as anyone who follows his metaphors will realise. He is always “mustering” and “deploying.”

Those who have been close to Churchill know of his intense loyalty to friends, even if he falls out with them politically. While you are a friend you can expect support to the hilt. But you must know that if you cross him Churchill will be an unrelenting opponent. Yet even in the heat of the argument he will often retain a deep regard and even personal affection for the man he is fighting, particularly if the man he is fighting really fights back.

**“How many prime ministers have felt themselves strong enough to call upon the House of Commons formally to reverse a vote deliberately given? Yet Churchill did this in the war on the issue of Equal Pay for Equal Work for male and female school-teachers during the passage of the Education Bill.”**

The farm would be something of a recreation but it would also be a study and a new interest; something from which he could learn as he always does from his hobbies, whether painting, bricklaying, making an ornamental garden, or, in more recent years, horse racing.

**The impetus of Sir Winston Churchill’s vitality is within himself, but I have often wondered what it is in the conditions of his life that seems to free him from fret and strain. What is it that enables him during long bouts of activity to come into every round of a struggle apparently refreshed? Is it perhaps the loyalty and devotion with which he is sheltered in his home? Their career keeps politicians away from their families and deprives them of many human enjoyments. That is part of the forfeit exacted from those who live under the servitude which we call power. What a great solace and stimulus it is to a politician to have his base secure! Churchill alone knows how much he owes to his good fortune in this respect. Long may his public service and his domestic happiness continue.”**

Never does he envisage failure. I recall Dame Margaret Lloyd George telling me how Churchill had bought a farm. He was quite new then to farming. “He insisted,” Dame Margaret said, “that he was ‘going to make it pay, whatever it costs.’”

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The Leader’s Personal Qualities

COL. JOHN MCKAY

From an address to the First Company, Brigade of Midshipmen, U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, 12 March 2012

In 1940 Britain’s new prime minister found himself decorating a shy young battle hero. “You feel very humble in my presence, don’t you?” Churchill allegedly said. “Yes sir,” the lad answered. “Then perhaps you can imagine,” WSC replied, “how humble and awkward I feel in yours.”

Churchill was perhaps thinking of his own experiences at that soldier’s age, when he had fought on the Northwest Frontier of what is now Pakistan; had accompanied Kitchener in the reconquest of the Sudan, including one of the last great cavalry charges in history; and had escaped captivity of the Boers in South Africa and returned to their capital in the vanguard of the victorious British occupying forces.

Such experience undoubtedly gave Churchill his intense interest in the welfare of troops, and his frequent acts to improve their comfort and wellbeing. His daughter, Lady Soames, provides an insight from his 1943 journey to Cairo, when WSC was accompanied by her sister Sarah: “We travel in style and round us is great luxury and seeming security,” Churchill remarked, “but I never forget the man at the front, the bitter struggles, and the fact that men are dying in the air, on the land, and at sea.”

Churchill was supremely equipped for the highest levels of war leadership. At the war’s outbreak in 1939 he had just concluded an exhaustive biography of his great ancestor, John Churchill, First Duke of Marlborough—a book the scholar Leo Strauss called “the greatest historical work written in our century, an inexhaustible mine of political wisdom and understanding.”

The uncanny similarity of Churchill’s actions as prime minister in the war against Hitler to those of John Churchill in the struggle against Louis XIV bear serious contemplation. Indeed, much of the phraseology of Churchill’s great wartime speeches was prefigured by his writings in Marlborough.

From his declaration to the young soldier we can see that Churchill highly regarded valor. Now you are embarking on a valorous journey, one that will require a large measure of devotion—perhaps, for some of you, as Lincoln said, “the last full measure of devotion.”

Service under arms has marked vocational elements and some, not always welcome, appearances of a profession. It is as a profession that your service can best be considered. Of all professions it is the most demanding; among all, it relies most critically on leadership—a word you have probably heard ad nauseam, but for good reason.

From the beginning of history force, or the threat of it, has been applied to the resolution of certain problems. As society grew more orderly the application of force became better ordered. I would certainly include in the need for force the attacks of 9/11. And the need shows no sign of disappearing. A society regulated by force alone is alike unacceptable and a social abstraction. But a society in which force is abjured, even for the common good, is inconceivable so long as mankind remains what it is.

Sometimes people at all levels in an armed force can be carried along by the machine itself, caught up in the structure. But when this occurs, the relationship between leaders and the led may be too weak to withstand acute strain. It is likely to break down under stress, when, as Churchill said, “self-preservation strikes its jarring gong.”

Knowing what is best to do is important. But knowing how best to get things done seems to me more important. At an arduous moment in World War II Churchill said: “The difficulty is not winning the war; it is persuading people to let you win it…”

The need for professional competence among those in charge is obvious, but in a group under stress of conflict this is not likely to be as critical as what I might call personal qualities, which are distinct from professional competence. The relationship between the two is complex, and must be approached with care.
The Leader’s Personal Qualities...

An essential leadership situation does not, I suggest, arise unless there is a recognized need to be led. A leader responds, in fact, to awareness on the other side of that need.

Shortly after becoming prime minister in May 1940, Churchill wrote to his foreign secretary, Anthony Eden: “There is a great opportunity now for picking leaders, not only among those who have had the opportunity of meeting the enemy, but also in those who have prepared themselves to do so. Men of force and intelligence and personality, who would make their way to leading positions…should be given their chance as soon as they have acquired the minimum of training. We want live wires, and not conventional types.”

Let me share a piece of folklore, ill-authenticated but apposite: a commanding officer was uneasy about a particular platoon commander who had a reputation for running away in battle. This belief was shared by the men in the platoon, not without reason. But the men liked the young officer, and wished him no ill. They therefore backed him stoutly on the battlefield, so that he should feel less inclined to run. His uneasy commanding officer quickly replaced him with another officer whose courage was beyond question. When the platoon next went into action the new commander was as brave as expected—but now the men ran away!

I recall this vignette to illustrate two things: first, the very complex nature of the leadership/led relationship (which excuses me from offering a systematic analysis of it); second because it suggests the truth of what a wise old soldier, the Maréchal de Saxe, used to say: “In a knowledge of the human heart must be sought the secrets of success and failure of armies.” He added that knowledge of the heart was “very imperfect.” Would he find it improved today, I wonder?

Churchill, who sought live wires, was of course one himself. Lord Hankey, secretary of the War Cabinet during World War I, later wrote: “We owed a good deal in those early days to the courage and inspiration of Winston Churchill who, unaunted by difficulties and losses, set an infectious example to those of his colleagues who had given less thought than he, if indeed any thought at all, to war problems….His stout attitude did something to hearten his colleagues.”

In that war as in the one to follow, Churchill responded to a clear need.

Leo Tolstoy addresses this point in his classic, War and Peace. Tolstoy argues that Napoleon was not a cause but a product; he emerged as the dominant figure in response to a need. Like Churchill, Napoleon did not bring about the situation in which he became supreme; but when it had occurred, it posed a problem to which he was the most appropriate answer.

Thus, whether the leader who emerges is up to the demands made upon him is a matter of chance. He may be very good indeed, like Napoleon or Churchill. And he may be less good. It is wrong to conclude that the degree of need determines the quality of the leader. Yet there is little doubt that unless there is a need, the function of a leader cannot be discharged.

How might all this apply to you? You find yourselves at a particularly challenging juncture in the history of civil-military relationships in your country. On the one hand the military is one of the more trusted institutions; yet it is also the national institution most removed from the civil polity of the country. The men and women you will lead are not necessarily representative of the official views of the country you serve. This tendency emerged during Vietnam, when the draft was still in force.

As you pursue your military careers you will be well served by keeping this dichotomy in mind. What does it mean for the nation? What does it mean for you as a leader? I cannot answer those questions. You will be challenged to answer them. In doing so you should try to cultivate, like Churchill, a temperament suited to crisis.

Of my own time in uniform I can truthfully say I was an anomaly. I had been reared outside the United States, partially educated in a Quaker school. I spoke two languages fluently, and got by in a third. Whether by studied consideration or happening, the Marine Corps took advantage of these facts to good effect. Most of you will be called upon to work, often extensively, in foreign lands. How many of you are fluent in a foreign language?

I began these remarks with an observation on Churchill’s respect for valor. Let me close with another of his thoughts that is also worth keeping in mind, on the problem of predicting what lies ahead:

“It is only with some difficulty and within limits,” he said, “that provision can be made for the future. Experience shows that forecasts are usually falsified, and preparations always in arrear.”

Go forth ladies and gentlemen of the mess, and do good works.

Endnotes

6. Gilbert, Road to Victory, 12.
COPING WITH THE PRESIDENT’S TABLE
Cita Stelzer on WSC and Franklin Roosevelt’s Food and Drink

In an amusing talk about her book, Dinner with Churchill (video at http://cs.pn/ZnbXhJ) Cita Stelzer explains how Churchill used his wit and wisdom to deal with President Roosevelt’s cuisine and drinks without appearing to disapprove.

Churchill, she says, liked “simple food exquisitely prepared,” most of it by his famous cook, Georgina Landemare; while Roosevelt constantly lambasted the quality of White House food, prepared by his chef Mrs. Nesbitt, himself adding to the ordeal with his own weird tastes—and by preparing simply the worst martinis in the world. From Mrs. Stelzer’s book (reviewed FH 153: 46):

“The first White House dinner at which Churchill had an opportunity to deploy his combination of charm and the careful planning he had done during his transatlantic voyages was at a ‘semiformal’ dinner on the day he arrived, 22 December 1941....” Mrs. Nesbitt did not cater to English tastes, and particularly those of WSC, “serving a cream soup, much disliked by Churchill, followed by kedgeree and grilled tomatoes and raspberry Mary Anne [which] may have made Churchill long for some home cooking.”

The book quotes an observer at one dinner: “The President loved sauerkraut and pigs’ knuckles and had that dish served to Churchill, who politely asked what they were. When told, Churchill, on his best behavior, only responded, according to [White House butler] Alonzo Fields, that they were ‘very good, but sort of slimy.’

“Roosevelt was known for his robust and unusual cocktails—the proportions of his martinis were said to be ‘unfortunate.’ Charles ‘Chip’ Bohlen, one of Roosevelt’s diplomats and his interpreter at Teheran, says the martinis were made with a ‘large quantity of vermouth, both sweet and dry, with a small amount of gin.’ No mention of the infamous Argentine vermouth to which he had introduced his British guest at Placentia Bay” during the Atlantic Conference of August 1941.

Churchill, Cita Stelzer added, was not a cocktail drinker, let alone martini, let alone martini that were half vermouth. So the Prime Minister surreptitiously avoided the diplomatic necessity of drinking them by depositing the contents of his glass in a nearby flowerpot.

If the plant died, we should not be surprised. ☞
125 YEARS AGO
Spring 1888 • Age 13
“It is awfully jolly.”

Winston entered Harrow School in April 1888, and on 20 April wrote his mother, “I like everything immensely.” But some things never change and in the same letter he added, “I am afraid I shall want more money.” The next day wrote: “Please send the money as soon as possible you promised me I should not be different to others.”

Military training was part of the Harrow curriculum and he particularly enjoyed this, telling his father in a June 3rd letter, “I am getting on very successfully in the corps especially in the Shooting. We use the full sized Martini-Henry rifle and cartridges, the same as the Army. The rifles kick a good deal, it is awfully jolly.”

On June 15th he wrote his mother, “I hope also that you are enjoying yourself at Ascot as much as I am enjoying myself at Harrow.”

100 YEARS AGO
Spring 1913 • Age 38
“Timetable of a Nightmare”

Almost from the time he became prime minister in 1940, Churchill doubted that the British Isles were in serious danger of an invasion. One reason for this might be that in 1913—when a young Adolf Hitler was leaving Vienna for Munich in a futile quest to restart his somewhat spotty career as an artist—Churchill had studied the problem of invasion in detail. On April 16th he released a confidential memorandum on a successful surprise invasion, entitled “The Timetable of a Nightmare.” In preparing it he had sought the counsel of his staff, such as Admiral Lewis Bayly, to whom he wrote:

Please assume that you are in full control of all the German resources, and that your object is to land as many men as possible in England either at one, two, or three places simultaneously or successively. How would you do it?...[F]or your first movements which open the war you must not make any preparations which would be certain to attract attention over here. It is thought that you might get 20,000 men on to the necessary shipping without exciting suspicion; but that is about the limit for the first plunge. Then, however, the question is whether more can be sent to reinforce those who have landed before the British fleet can get round to dominate the situation. Or, again, assuming the British fleet has been attracted to one point, could a second disembarkation be made somewhere else?... If there are any points which require discussion, will you come and see me this afternoon?

His purpose, Churchill explained in The World Crisis, was “to explore and illuminate the situations that might arise...what we thought the enemy might do against us, and the dangers we hoped to avoid ourselves.” His object was “to stimulate thought in the Admiralty War Staff and to expose weak points in our arrangements...I caused war games to be played at the War College in which, aided by one or the other of my naval advisers, I took one side, usually the German, and forced certain situations” (emphasis added).

In 1940 Churchill knew what he had learned in 1913: England could be successfully invaded only by surprise, and while the Fleet was distracted. Once at its war stations, the Royal Navy would make an invasion impossible. He knew a Nazi invasion could never come by surprise and the only variable not present in 1913 was air power. Once the RAF kept the Luftwaffe from gaining daylight air supremacy, Churchill was assured his assumptions were right.

On April 26th Churchill was summoned before a Parliamentary Select Committee investigating the Marconi Scandal, involving improper holdings of Marconi shares by certain Members of Parliament. The basis for his summons was a rumor, testified to that day by the editor of the Financial News, that Churchill had been successfully dealing in Marconi shares—for which the editor had no evidence and which he personally believed to be false. Churchill, who had never owned Marconi shares, was livid that he had been summoned, and as The Times reported, lit into the Committee:

Am I to understand that every person, Minister or Member of Parliament, whose name is mentioned by current rumour and brought forward by a witness who says he does not believe it, is to be summoned before you to give a categorical denial to charges which, as I have pointed out, have become grossly insulting by reason of the fact that the Minister in question, it is suggested, has concealed up to this moment what his position was? Are you going to summon anybody else?...[W]hat public man is there about whom lies are not in circulation? If I tried to contradict every lie put forward about me, I could not get through my daily work. One is entitled to protest against such statements unless the person making them has good reason or some prima facie evidence to justify them.

75 YEARS AGO
Winter 1937-38 • Age 63
“You have only to look at the map.”

On March 24th Churchill in the Commons urged a formal alliance with France as the best way to preserve peace in Europe: “Treat the defensive problems of the two countries as if they were one. Then you will have a real deterrent against unprovoked aggression.”
The same day, Churchill received two crucial letters affecting his finances. One was from the editor of *The Evening Standard*, owned by his friend Lord Beaverbrook; the other was from the financier Sir Henry Strakosch.

The value of Churchill’s holdings in American stocks had declined so precipitously that his account with the London firm of Vickers da Costa had a negative balance in excess of £18,000. Churchill decided he had no choice but to sell Chartwell, his beloved country home, to pay off his debt. Then Lord Beaverbrook had piled on, canceling WSC’s twice-monthly articles in the newspaper, which were netting him over £1600 annually.

Fortunately, Strakosch’s letter advised that he had paid off Churchill’s debt to Vickers and taken delivery of the U.S. securities in WSC’s account there, confirming an agreement of a week earlier: Strakosch would have complete control of Churchill’s stock portfolio for three years, during which he could buy and sell as he wished while Churchill would incur no further liability. Saved by his friend, Churchill took Chartwell off the market and, early in April, effected a transfer of his newspaper articles to the *Daily Telegraph* at no loss of income.

Churchill’s son-in-law, Duncan Sandys MP, was planning a trip on behalf of the Parliamentary Air Raid Precautions Committee to much-bombed Barcelona, where 500 civilians had been killed during a three-day span earlier in March. (See “Honored in Barcelona,” page 6.) Sandys wanted to take his wife Diana, Churchill’s daughter. Her father successfully dissuaded him:

> There is no excuse whatever for bringing her into this scene of misery, privation and danger. You may easily have great difficulty in getting out if the front breaks while you are there. I am bound to let you know how very strong my opinion is.

On May 13th, at the request of Robert Vansittart of the Foreign Office, Churchill gave a secret luncheon for the Sudeten Czech Nazi leader Konrad Henlein. Present were Liberal MP Archie Sinclair; Malcolm Christie, a former air attaché in Berlin and friend of Goering; and Professor Lindemann, who took notes. In response to Churchill’s prodding, Henlein proposed autonomy for the Sudeten Germans which “would not destroy the integrity of the Czech state.” Churchill approved, as did Jan Masaryk, Czech ambassador to Britain.

The details of Henlein’s proposal are less important than his stated belief that if Germany ever invaded Czechoslovakia, “France would come in and England would follow.” Churchill said this was correct. Christie wrote that Henlein “took away with him the firm impression” that German aggression against Czechoslovakia would not be tolerated.

What Churchill and Christie did not know was that Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain had already secretly decided the fate of Czechoslovakia. Writing to his sister in late March, Chamberlain said that an Anglo-French alliance was impracticable: “You have only to look at the map to see” that neither France nor England “could possibly save” Czechoslovakia from “being overrun by the Germans.” Any effort by France and England to help the Czechs “would simply be a pretest for going to war with Germany”—a war that Chamberlain thought the Anglo-French had no “reasonable prospect” of winning.

Churchill was planning to supplement his income with a speaking tour of the United States in the autumn. His goal was at least twenty-five speeches at $2000 each (over $800,000 in today’s money). On 18 April Churchill’s American agent, Harold Peal, wrote that he had already signed contracts for twelve cities and had no doubt the tour would be “completely sold out.” But the Munich crisis that coming autumn would thwart all plans for the speaking tour. Had he known, Hitler doubtless would have been pleased that the crisis he initiated would deprive his future nemesis of a small fortune.

### 50 YEARS AGO

*Spring 1963 • Age 88*

“*It was a bitter decision.*

On April 9th, at a White House ceremony attended by his son and grandson, Sir Winston was presented by President Kennedy with an honorary American citizenship, the first foreigner to be so honored since Lafayette after the Revolutionary War. The same day Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, after a London dinner that evening with Supreme Allied Commander in Europe Lyman Lemnitzer, Field Marshal Alexander and Lord Mountbatten, wrote WSC: “We and others present unanimously agreed to send you a message recalling the days we worked together under your leadership. We also wished to express our delight at your versatility which allows you to combine being a loyal British subject with being a good United States’ citizen.”

An election was coming in 1964 and Sir Winston was under pressure from his family and his Constituency chairman, Doris Moss, not to stand again as Member for Woodford. On April 19th Lady Churchill wrote: “I hope Darling you are thinking carefully about the letter Christopher [Soames] wrote to you—He read it to me before he despatched it & I agree with all he says. I don’t see how you can stand next year without campaigning & fighting for your seat—And it would be kind to let your Executive Council know now, before they become too restive.”

Clementine continued a week later: “You know your Chairman, Mrs. Moss, is coming to luncheon to-day hoping for a decision—Don’t forget that you promised your Executive that you would at the next General Election make way for a younger man.”

Her good advice had its intended effect. On May 1st, Churchill wrote to Mrs. Moss to say he would not stand in the next election. “For him,” his daughter Mary wrote, “it was a bitter decision.”
Leslie Illingworth was born in Barry, Glamorgan, South Wales on 2 September 1902, the son of a Yorkshire surveyor who worked in the Engineers’ Department of Barry Docks. After attending St. Anthan church school, he won the first of a series of scholarships from his county grammar school. He joined the lithographic department of the Western Mail in Cardiff, “because my father used to golf with Sir Robert J. Webber, chief of the newspaper.”

Whilst working afternoons for the Western Mail, Illingworth attended the Cardiff School of Art, where he had won another scholarship. Attending with him was Ronald Niebour, another cartoonist who would be his colleague later on Daily Mail and Punch, but they lost touch when Niebour went into the Merchant Navy. He was publishing cartoons in the Football Express, and continued to draw sporting cartoons for the Western Mail, while attending Cardiff Art School, as well as deputising for the paper’s political cartoonist, the ailing J.M. Staniforth.

In 1920 Illingworth won another scholarship, this time to the Royal College of Art, where he received encouragement from the painter, draughtsman and art writer William Rothenstein. But when Staniforth died a few months later, the Western Mail offered Illingworth his job at £6 a week, and he left college to take up the post in 1921.

In 1924, continuing to work for the newspaper, Illingworth returned to London to study at the Slade School. A new opportunity for commissions was Owen Aves, editor of Passing Show, and in 1927, after Aves became an artist’s agent, he found enough work for Illingworth to go freelance. The same year he received his first commission from Punch: “I was a good artist,” Illingworth later recalled, “and I could make a lot of money.”
For part of 1927-28 Illingworth travelled to North America, returning to continue his art training in Berlin and Paris. He had a Paris flat and studied at the Académie Julian. His career bloomed, with freelance assignments for Nash’s Pall Mall, Passing Show, The Strand Magazine, Good Housekeeping, London Opinion, Red Magazine, Wills’ Magazine, Answers, Tit-Bits and, later, Life. He also produced commercial illustrations, such as “Beer is Best,” and advertising art for Winsor & Newton, Grey’s Cigarettes, Symington’s Soups, Eiffel Tower Lemonade and Wolsey underwear. In 1930 he again visited Canada and the United States, and in 1937 he drafted his first “big cut” for Punch, which he continued to supply with regular political cartoons.

When Percy Fearon (the famous “Poy”) retired from the Daily Mail in 1938, Illingworth applied for his job. A big London paper was a prime opportunity, but Illingworth bylined his sample drawings “MacGregor,” lest there be any prejudice over employing “Illingworth of Punch.” There was good reason for caution: Percy Bradshaw of the Press Art School, asked to recommend cartoonists for the Daily Mail, said Illingworth was “not among those who, in my view, would be able to hold the job down.” It also seemed possible that Illingworth’s detailed style might not be adaptable to daily cartoons.

But the work he submitted was liked, and he joined the Mail staff in November 1939, his country already at war—which offered him a plethora of subject matter. He produced a cartoon a day, noting that “it was absolutely easy—there’s no doubt about it.” He also produced work for Ministries of Information and Health.

Illingworth’s busiest time in those years began on Thursday mornings, after his Punch cartoon had been commissioned the previous day. This was the toughest part of his week, when he had “a Punch cartoon and two Mail cartoons to produce before Saturday.” He often worked through the night and into the next day to finish his detailed drawings. His wartime cartoons were very successful—and widespread. After the war a copy of his Daily Mail cartoon for 14 January 1944, predicting Hitler’s nightmare of a two-front war in Europe, was found in the ruins of Hitler’s Chancellery.

When Bernard Partridge died in 1945, Leslie Illingworth replaced him as Punch’s “second cartoonist,” working alongside Ernest Shepard. By 1949 Illingworth was sharing cartoonist duty with Norman Mansbridge.

Though he became a member of the Punch Table after the war, Illingworth considered himself uneducated, and was very shy at the weekly lunches where cartoon subjects were discussed. When Malcolm Muggeridge was editor of Punch from 1953 to 1957, Illingworth would sit between him and John Betjeman, the writer-poet who in 1972 became Britain’s Poet Laureate. “They were very kind to me,” he recalled. “I was conscious that I was a monumental bore, so I used to concentrate on the claret and keep as quiet as a cabbage.”

Muggeridge recalled that Illingworth “did not have a strongly political mind, a whole series of suggestions might be put to him...without his reacting strongly.” Eventually one would fire his imagination, and “from then on the only anxiety was actually to lay hands on the cartoon....If left to himself he >>
would go on working away at it indefinitely; sometimes it had to be snatched from him by cunning or brute force.”

The result of his intense labour was a highly-detailed, distinctive cartoon which took a day to produce and was designed to make a political point that would remain topical for a week. His and Muggeridge’s most controversial collaboration was a portrait of an aged and apparently ailing Churchill, which appeared in Punch on 3 February 1954. It was captioned: “Man Goeth Forth unto His Work and to His Labour until the Evening,” greeted with consternation at Downing Street, and especially by the Prime Minister himself. (See Tim Benson, “The Cartoon That Shocked the Prime Minister,” Finest Hour 113, Winter 2001-02.) Illingworth’s Churchill cartoons had been generally positive up until then, but Muggeridge was a critic, believing WSC had remained in office far too long.

Bernard Hollowood, who succeeded Muggeridge and edited Punch through 1969, agreed that Illingworth lacked political passion and “produced very few of his own ideas.” Instead, “the chief political cartoons were produced communally, and the method suited Leslie.” The idea for the cartoon would be conceived during the Wednesday lunch, and, as one Punch writer explained in 1966: “Every aspect of the drawing is discussed, Illingworth makes a number of roughs in which the position of figures and objects is finalised, and then returns to his Barbican flat to start work on the actual finish.”

In 1962 Leslie Illingworth was voted Political and Social Cartoonist of the Year by the Cartoonist Club of Great Britain, and in 1966 he became one of the founder members of the British Cartoonists’ Association, serving as its first President. He was earning £1000 a year from Punch and £7000 a year from the Daily Mail, making regular trips to the Houses of Parliament to study his subjects in action: “I have a season ticket to the gallery—there’s usually a lovely show going on there.”

He was fascinated by politicians’ concern for their appearance—”They know all the angles...and they’re always combing themselves”—and their need for cartoons of them: “To be left out...that’s death and destruction.” Yet he admitted he was unable to caricature women; he might quickly have had to learn had he worked in the age of Margaret Thatcher.

At sixty-six, Illingworth began to slow his hectic pace. He was succeeded by Wally Fawkes at Punch in 1968, but
continued with the Mail for another year, working in close consultation with the editor. In the morning he would listen to the news and read the papers, working up a number of roughs which they talked over at lunchtime. After a final subject was chosen, he would return to his office and work up his final version. An interviewer said it might take Illingworth three hours to develop his cartoon from a final sketch approved by the editor.

Retiring from the Mail in 1969, the artist took up farming in Sussex. But he lived on in the Mail as “Organ Morgan,” the Welsh farmer in Wally Fawkes’s cartoon strip, “Flook.” Four years later, short of cash to pay back taxes, he returned to the fray, standing in for Paul Rigby on the Sun, and producing a weekly cartoon for the News of the World in 1974.

His habitual work habits remained, but he no longer needed to submit a wide menu of ideas. Every Thursday in Sussex, he said, he would read the papers intently and produce a pencil sketch. The next day he would “drive up to...Bouverie Street to show it to the editor and ink it in....Very seldom do the editor and his executives suggest what should be drawn. Sometimes I take up to three or four samples. Only once did I have to follow their ideas.” In 1975 he received an Honorary D.Litt. from the University of Kent, the educational cachet he had long desired.

Illingworth used a Gillott 290 pen with Higgins ink on hot-pressed fashion board, roughing out a drawing first in pencil; he was one of the first cartoonists to employ scraperboard. He claimed to concentrate best surrounded by “lots of chatter,” and his Daily Mail office was often full of his colleagues. He disliked seeing his own work in print, claiming that he would “skip the pages I’m in.”

A great admirer of Carl Giles, famed cartoonist of the Daily Express—“no one, anywhere, can come up to Giles”—Illingworth thought of himself as “a red-nosed comic artist.” But his work was widely admired by his fellow cartoonists, and his classical style has been likened to the early work of the great Victorian cartoonist John Tenniel.

Asked how he managed to survive so long in Fleet Street, Illingworth said: “When the editor comes in looking for someone to sack, I hide behind the door and he doesn’t see me.”

Leslie Illingworth died on 20 December 1979. In 2009 a commemorative blue plaque was placed on his former home in Barry. 

Above: Illingworth’s Daily Mail cartoon of 14 January 1944, lampooning Adolf Hitler caught between Soviet advances (“Dnieper Trap”) and the looming Allied invasion of France. Incongruously, a copy was found in the ruins of the Chancellery in Berlin. Left: Churchill turned 70 on 30 November 1944, and the cartoonist celebrated.

Cartoons herein reprinted by kind permission of the British Cartoon Archive, University of Kent, Canterbury; and the Political Cartoon Gallery.
A Monument in Churchill Studies

RICHARD M. LANGWORTH

One of the earliest members of The Churchill Centre, Celwyn Ball served from 1983 to the early 1990s as chairman of the International Churchill Society of Canada and, with his late wife Patricia, he attended many conferences in North America and England. In 2002 he received the Blenheim Award, an overdue recognition of his contributions to the memory of Sir Winston and to the Centre and Societies; but his masterwork was still to come.

Celwyn’s Churchill interest was kindled after he served with the British First Army during the campaign in North Africa. As an Intelligence sergeant in the Reconnaissance Corps, he helped protect Generals Dwight Eisenhower and Mark Clark. “General Clark was six and a half feet tall,” Celwyn remembers, “and we were told to ‘keep our holsters open’ to protect such an easy target, not to mention all the colonels and majors around him.” Modestly describing himself as a “lowly sergeant,” he sustained wounds that he never quite got over, like so many heroes of the Desert Armies. A welder, draftsman and engineer, his projects included design and development of new bridges, overhead cranes and large-scale mobile equipment. He emigrated to Canada in 1957.

A philatelist, Celwyn was attracted to the postage stamps commemorating Churchill. He began his collection in 1965 with the British Commonwealth “omnibus” issue, in which thirty-two countries produced their versions of a uniform design picturing Sir Winston with a backdrop of searchlights and St. Paul’s Cathedral in the Blitz. Great Britain, Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand issued their own Churchill commemoratives, which he quickly acquired.

Next Celwyn sifted through his general world collection and stamp catalogues for other stamps issued to honor WSC. He was surprised at the quantity, including “forerunners,” issued before 1965. The most famous of those was produced by Colombia: a “Big Three” overprint on a 1939 stamp to mark the Yalta conference in 1945.

Celwyn then set out to amass all the Churchill commemoratives, whose numbers peaked in 1965-66, and again during the Churchill Centenary in 1974. This was a formidable task. The British Channel Islands (Guernsey, Jersey, Alderney, Sark and Herm) alone issued nineteen sets and twenty images. Among independent countries the leader is Antigua & Barbuda, with thirteen sets and eleven images.

Celwyn was faced with a challenge by the so-called “stamps” from Arab Trucial states like Ajman, Fujieira, Sharjah and Um-al-Qiwain, complete with a multitude of revalued issues, overprints and souvenir sheets. Then there were “locals” and labels, ostensibly issued to cover the carriage of postage from holiday islands to the nearest general post office. Some, like Herm Island, off Guernsey, were genuine, but most hardly ever saw postal use and were largely produced to reap profit from the worldwide Churchill collector interest. The largest issuers of locals, hardly ever any of which were used for carriage, were the Marshall Islands and Calf of Man, with eighteen sets each. Such stamps are known as “black blots” by philatelists, and identifying them was the original raison d’être of the Churchill Study Unit, which grew into today’s Churchill Centre.

For Celwyn it made no difference: he wanted them all. Somebody had to do this! As a result, his collection today may be the only known complete assembly of every Churchill stamp ever issued. It was a colossal effort.

The author as Intelligence Sergeant, 1st Reconnaissance Regiment, 1946; and today (photo by Randolph Rhodes).
than 150 stamp-issuing nations produced over 500 Churchill stamps, from 1945 to date. Many are very rare.

The next step was reducing his thirty-plus volumes to catalogue form, a task begun by Celwyn and Patricia and completed with the technical expertise of their daughter Alison. The Churchill World Stamp Catalogue reproduces in color 526 stamps, complete with accompanying, informative notes.

We have only one regret, which has nothing to do with the production. In his draft manuscript, Celwyn included numbers from the major catalogue publishers: Scott, Minkus, Caras and Stanley Gibbons. But several of these publishers refused to license the use of their numbers, the lingua franca of philately, without forbiddingly prohibitive conditions. The authors had no choice but to eliminate them, which makes finding the stamps on dealer lists considerably harder than it needs to be. Ironically, this also discourages the use of the catalogues their narrow-minded publishers seek to protect.

Undaunted, the authors supplied their own unique numbers, impeccable documentation, and large-size color illustrations. The result is a work of highest quality in the field of Churchill Studies. Even if you are not a stamp collector, the details and illustrations in this beautiful book belong in your Churchill library: a tribute not only to Sir Winston, but to the affable veteran who served his memory, and his country.

“To collect Churchill stamps,” Celwyn Ball writes, “is to see how his influence and literary writings were recognized throughout the world.” Don’t be without this one.

**Historical Damage Control**

**CHRISTOPHER H. STERLING**

*Churchill and Sea Power*, by Christopher M. Bell. Oxford University Press, Hardbound, illus, 430 pp., $34.95. Member price $27.95. For more on this book visit http://christophermbell.ca.

Ranging over events covering nearly half a century, this is an important addition to the already vast literature on Churchill as a military leader. A historian at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Christopher Bell has published widely on naval history. His newest study provides a quite different view of Churchill’s role compared to the rather negative perception that for decades has dominated writing on the subject.

Stephen Roskill wrote the official Royal Navy multi-volume history, *The War at Sea* (1954-61), and followed that with his even more critical *Churchill and the Admirals* (1977). In both works, Roskill presented a severe view of Churchill’s role and impact, arguing that too often he overruled his senior naval advisers, sometimes with disastrous results (such as the bungled 1940 campaign in Norway and the >>

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Churchill and Sea Power...

loss of “Force Z” off Singapore late in 1941. Roskill’s Churchill is tempestuous and impatient for action, sometimes to the detriment of the Senior Service. Two other studies, Richard Hough’s Former Naval Person: Churchill and the Wars at Sea (1985), and, to a lesser degree, Peter Gretton’s Former Naval Person: Winston Churchill and the Royal Navy (1968), followed Roskill’s lead. So did many other more specialized studies, including books on the two world wars.

Putting these aside (save for some comparative comments), Bell turned to the relevant primary documents, some from World War II that were not available to earlier authors, and uses them to draw quite different conclusions. He finds Churchill’s role far more positive than many previous historians. Mistakes were clearly made—and are acknowledged and assessed—but Churchill’s full record over both world wars is described in largely positive terms.

Bell focuses closely on the interplay between the political leaders of Whitehall and senior naval officials. Perhaps unexpectedly, this makes for often quite compelling reading. We learn, for example, that Churchill was not initially attracted to an attack on the Dardanelles, telling Admiral Fisher at the start of 1915 that “it is bad war to seek cheaper victories and easier antagonists” (61). Instead, he pushed for occupation of an island off the Heligoland Bight from which to entice the German High Seas fleet out to battle, while limiting its submarine forays. Senior admirals managed to dissuade him, though Churchill raised the idea repeatedly.

Fisher’s and Churchill’s positions on the Dardanelles reversed by the early spring of 1915, as the operation became more complex, far more than the naval action Churchill originally supported—and far less of a sure thing. By the time the battle reached its frustrating climax at the end of 1915, both men were out of power, watching from the sidelines and unable to affect events.

Bell admits that while the venture “undoubtedly demonstrates Churchill’s shortcomings as a war manager and strategist,” WSC had added vital strength to the War Cabinet in the war’s opening months: He was one of the few who “possessed the knowledge and confidence to question the advice of generals and admirals, a trait that was often in short supply” (73).

Bell next shows how Churchill carried lessons from the First World War to his leadership role during the Second. One was the value of convoys in the North Atlantic—something the U.S. Navy long refused to recognize. Further, Bell argues, “Churchill’s triumph during the Second World War helped to rehabilitate his reputation from the First World War” (321).

By the early 1940s, Churchill was convinced of the greater importance of air power over sea power in protecting Britain’s interests. The loss of HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse near Singapore in December hammered that lesson home—though the decision to head out on their ill-fated mission without air cover was not ordered by Churchill. So important did he deem air power that his deflection of men and material to RAF Bomber Command—the only means of directly attacking Germany before 1944—that the Navy suffered from want of aircraft, particularly Coastal Command during the worst period of the U-boat threat. The controversy that arose over these priorities is still debated—and the author reviews the arguments well here.

Bell’s volume rewards close reading. His final summation is measured and warranted: “Winston Churchill understood the navy’s capabilities and its limitations better than probably any other politician of this period. The nation was fortunate that he was so frequently and prominently involved in managing its naval affairs” (341).

To Charles, with Apologies

TERRY REARDON

Churchill and De Gaulle: The Greatest Allies, by Clifford Alain Stossel. Headcorn Instrumentation, softbound, illus., 340 pp. In and out of stock regularly, is available for as little as £6 from Amazon UK.

Self-publishing is quite acceptable, but a book should conform to normal standards. In this case there is no index and no notes; the reader has no reference information to judge the accuracy of the material.

Besides numerous spelling errors such as a Canadian premier (correctly shown as Mackenzie King, but also MacKenzie-King and MacKenzie King), there are many errors of fact. For instance, “the defeat of Dunkirk caused the unseating of Neville Chamberlain,” (Chamberlain resigned 10 May 1940, the Dunkirk evacuation began on 26 May). The Russo-German non-aggression pact was signed in August 1939, not January 1941. The islands St Pierre et Miquelon were occupied by the Free French on 24 December 1941, not prior to the Dakar attack of 23 September 1941.

De Gaulle’s famous snub of Churchill, who wished to meet with him in Marrakesh in early January 1944, gets a curious treatment by the author, who writes: “The truth of the matter is that de Gaulle was very ready to go and see Churchill, but his duties made a small delay necessary.” Harold Macmillan, the British resident minister in North Africa, recorded: “I went to see de Gaulle to give him the Prime

Mr. Reardon, a FH contributor, is the author of the recent book, Winston Churchill and Mackenzie King.
Minister’s urgent invitation. He received it without much apparent enthusiasm, as I expected; and added that he was very busy and could not, of course, alter his plans at such short notice. Moreover, the PM had lately gone out of his way to insult and thwart him.” Duff Cooper, ambassador to the Free French, wrote in his diary: “De Gaulle suspected that he was being summoned to the Prime Minister’s presence in a way which might injure his dignity.” Thus de Gaulle did not meet with Churchill, enabling the Frenchman to retain his sense of importance.

This was a minor incident, but just seven months later, and not noted here, de Gaulle again refused to meet Churchill. Duff Cooper wrote: “...he said that he thought nothing would be gained by an interview...I did my best to persuade him to change his mind.” Duff did persuade de Gaulle to write Churchill saying that he did not wish to disturb his short time in Algiers between flights. Duff concluded: “It is incredibly stupid on his part—one of the most foolish things he has done.”

Mr. Stossel makes something of Churchill’s support for French interests: A place “was finally secured for France at the Teheran conference, almost as an afterthought,” he writes, “slid through by Churchill when everyone else was tired and unfocussed on the real meaning of his efforts on France’s behalf.” The Teheran Conference was between the Big Three; I can find no evidence in any source that France was represented in any capacity.

A non-fiction book should be fully documented in order to substantiate the information it contains. The reader can then decide whether or not he accepts the author’s conclusions. When the reader is left in the dark on sources, the reading exercise is pointless.

Save your money: If you wish to learn more about the Churchill-de Gaulle relationship, I recommend two standards: Churchill and de Gaulle by Francois Kersaudy, and Allies at War by Simon Berthon—not to mention the pages of Finest Hour, particularly the previous issue. ☀

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**Real Life, Well Told for the Young**

**FRED GLUECKSTEIN**

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At the age of twelve, Harriet Castor’s first book, Fat Puss and Friends, about a cat she befriended, was published by Penguin. Since then Castor, who was born in Cambridge, has written over forty fiction and non-fiction books for children and young adults. Her latest (not her first) Churchill effort is a well-written and attention-grabbing mini-biography.

Castor’s interest in Churchill began in 2000, when she was commissioned to write a children’s book about famous British statesmen. Her *Winston Churchill*, in the Famous People series (2002), allowed her to dig into the saga. “And I became enthralled, amazed, gob smacked [extremely surprised] by the man. All my suspicions evaporated. I was awed by his chutzpah, the foresight, the courage—not just his physical bravery (astonishing enough and demonstrated consistently, decade after decade, war after war), but by his mental toughness. I admired the humanity, the drive, the refusal to give up whatever the situation, the willingness to say what he thought, whatever the reaction it brought, his wit, his wonderful way with the English language, his sheer force of personality....”

The volume begins on an armoured train during the war in South Africa, where Churchill is a war correspondent:

Boom! Bang! The explosions were terrifying. Enemy soldiers, hidden in the hills beside the railway track, were firing on the train with rifles and big field guns. ‘It’s an ambush!’ yelled Captain Haldane from his wagon. ‘Driver – go faster’... In one of the rear trucks, a newspaper war reporter stood among the soldiers. He turned to Captain Haldane. ‘We’re going too fast, aren’t we? It’s unsafe. Should I climb along to the engine and tell the driver to slow down?’ Before Haldane could reply, there was an enormous bang and jolt from the front of the train. Everyone in the truck was thrown to the floor....The next moment heavy rifle-fire began whistling through the air and clanging against the steel-plated sides of the train. ‘We’re sitting ducks!’ exclaimed the reporter....

Subsequent chapters cover Churchill’s escape, entry into politics, service at the Admiralty, involvement in conceiving the tank, and loss of office over the Dardanelles. Castor describes Churchill’s political banishment, introduction to painting, service as a battalion commander in France, postwar return to the Tories, warnings over Germany, and return to the Admiralty as war broke out. Subsequent chapters cover the wartime prime minister: his difficult decisions following the fall of France, the Battle of Britain, planning D-Day, and so on. Included within the story line are brief historical backgrounders of the times and Churchill’s famous “fight on the beaches” speech. Sir Winston’s final years are deftly covered with economy of words, but Castor does not miss the salient facts.

This book is accurate, thanks to the author’s faithfulness to Churchill’s own books and those of his chief biographers, which are referenced in the bibliography. For young people, it is an excellent introduction to Churchill that will stimulate further reading. ☀

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Finest Hour 158 / 51
Preamble: The Depressive


★ It is part of the contradictory nature of Churchill that he manifested various symptoms of depression—risk taking, excessive drinking, mood swings—not intermittently, but regularly (even daily), lifelong. A fierce determinism informs Storr’s thinking. His Churchill is a creative genius driven by subconscious influences who somehow, instinctively, pursues hobbies and interests beneficial to his mental health because not to do so would invite his depression, always swimming just below the surface, to rise up and drag him down into the darkness.

Storr’s Churchill is nothing more than the sum of his genes and his childhood environment….He ascribes to Churchill an “iron will” in pursuit of his therapeutic pastimes, but for Storr even Churchill’s will is both a product of and a prophylactic against the influences of genes and environment. This is a lot of tautological nonsense akin to claiming that absent the joy Churchill found in life he would have found no joy in life. Storr’s determinism removes the moral quotient from Churchill and his actions. Winston Churchill believed in the exercise of free will, and in the acceptance of responsibility for the consequences. Those, like Storr, who stuff Churchill into a determinist mould, deny themselves the mystery of his myriad personality quirks, the power of his will, and the pleasure of his company.

1942: Before First Alamein

Written by Paul Reid, this is as fine a piece of narrative as one could hope for from the pen of Manchester himself….★

Rommel had retreated before Auchinleck, but more to the point, he had escaped, and rearmed. The peril had shifted to “The Auk,” although the danger was belied by the quietude that had settled over the desert, where the armies dug in and faced each other just beyond field artillery range. Nights were cool. Intermittent rain showers brought forth blooms to stunted shrubs while small desert flowers scrabbled from beneath the cracked sand and stones as sunshine as weak as camomile tea threw indeterminate shadows across the sands.

1942: Lord Moran’s Diaries

Sir Martin Gilbert and other historians, examining Moran’s actual diaries, were surprised to find in them much less than Moran published in his book, suggesting strongly that the book was composed partly from memory….★

Lord Moran’s book (1966) is part diary and part after-the-fact recollection presented as diary entries. Wilson was not present in many of the scenes he paints himself into, and in which he quotes WSC. Churchill’s postwar secretary, Anthony Montague Browne later declared (WM interview, 15 November 1980) that Churchill would no more hold substantive conversations with Wilson about politics “than he would discuss the state of his bowels with his chiefs of staff.” Browne held suspect much of the “debating, conversations and quotes [Wilson] put into people’s mouths.”
1942-43: The Second Front
Here is one of the most balanced summaries we may hope to read of disagreements over the Second Front, and what Churchill actually believed….

★ Three months before TORCH [the invasion of North Africa] kicked off, Churchill told Roosevelt that the British would willingly accept Marshall as supreme commander of ROUNDUP [initial codeword for the invasion of France]. Churchill did this knowing full well Marshall had one and only one strategy in mind, to strike straight into France. Sherwood: “This nomination of the most vehement proponent of the Second Front would hardly indicate that Churchill was attempting to relegate it to the Files of Forgotten Things.” He…had also begun to proclaim a truth as he saw it, that a disastrous defeat on the coast of France “was the only way in which we could lose this war.”

That conclusion was self-evidently correct. A defeat on the coast of France would lead, if not to immediate defeat, to Marshall and King shifting the entire American effort to the Pacific….These were Churchill’s sentiments exactly. ROUNDUP was to be one of several operations. Churchill’s multi-fron thinking was a constant source of worry to Brooke, who wrote in his diary: “He is now swinging away from those [Sardinia and Sicily] for a possible invasion of France in 1943!” Eisenhower, meanwhile, was swinging toward Sardinia, where three German divisions were dug in.

1943: His Great American Moment
The last vestige of American isolationism died with Churchill’s speech at Harvard (FH 80; audio at www.winstonchurchill.org/learn/speeches/audio-archive). Here he went so far as to propose Anglo-American common citizenship, which would have been considered flagrant meddling in U.S. internal affairs only a year or so earlier….

★ Churchill’s extraordinary proposal of common citizenship had certainly been cleared by Roosevelt, who in fact assured him that America was now so far removed from its isolationist past that the idea of dual citizenship would not “outrage public opinion or provide another Boston Tea Party.” Eager to measure public reaction to the speech, Churchill ordered the British Embassy to sift American newspapers for opinions. But because the White House had announced the speech would contain little of political significance it had not been covered. As well, two horrific train crashes that week occupied the front pages of American newspapers. Churchill’s great American moment went largely unnoticed. Still, The New York Times declared the speech “opened a vast and hopeful field of discussion…. Down the grim corridors of war light begins to show.” On this day Churchill quite possibly reached the high water mark of his war leadership.

1943-44: Palestine
Here is a sound and fair description of the prewar Palestine White Paper and its anti-Semitic implications. “Palestine,” remember, consisted of what is now Jordan and Israel. Arabs were left with 6/7ths of Palestine and are still the majority: Israel 7.3 million (75% Jews, 20% Muslims); Jordan 6.2 million (90% Muslims, 8% Christians, no Jews).

★ The 1939 White Paper called for an end to Jewish immigration to Palestine in 1944, and the establishment of a single Palestinian state in which the Arabs, by virtue of holding veto power on further Jewish immigration, would outnumber Jews by 3-1. It was intended to placate Arabs throughout the Middle East. Chamberlain believed that if war came, the Arab world would be a far stronger ally against Hitler than 500,000 Palestinian Jews….The British military chiefs advocated adoption. Churchill did not, and considered the White Paper to be a betrayal of the Balfour Declaration and a betrayal of Jews. He had opposed the policy in 1939 and still did, because the Arab majority within a single Palestinian state would never allow the Jewish minority to execute a partition into two separate states. If trouble arose over partition, Churchill told Ismay, it will come from the Arabs and that “left to themselves, the Jews would beat the Arabs.”

His support for Zionism never flagged, even when later in the year two young Zionist terrorists assassinated Lord Moyne….When Churchill learned that Zionists worldwide protested the death sentence imposed on Moyne’s assassins he advised Cairo officials, where the murder took place, to hang the killers, and hang them quickly. The sentence was carried out.

1944: Iran
Among the book’s special qualities is its relentless pursuit of naive and delerious notions—of President Roosevelt as well as Prime Minister Churchill. Most writers continually dwell on the latter and overlook the former.

★ In early March Churchill received a short letter from Roosevelt which contained an extraordinary proposal in the form of a memorandum on the future of Iran….Roosevelt offered that it would take “thirty or forty years to eliminate the graft” in Iran and to properly prepare the people for democracy. In the interim the country would “need trustees”; Roosevelt nominated America, Russia and Britain for that role. The trustees’ mandate would be the “care and education” of Iranians. For comic relief he tossed in, “From your and my personal observation I think we could add something about cleanliness as well.” One line offered a direct challenge to Churchill and the British Empire: “I do not want the United States to acquire a ‘zone of influence’—or any other nation for that matter.”

1944: WSC and His Generals
The book’s descriptions of the often fraught relations between the Prime Minister and his military chiefs, particularly Alanbrooke, are finely crafted. Brooke wrote his waspish notes, thinking only he would ever see them, late at night when he was often tired, frustrated and depressed. Only years later, strapped for cash, did Brooke allow portions of his diaries to be published, accompanied by a written apology to WSC. >>
Defender of the Realm...

★ Despite the tumultuousness of the staff meetings, to say nothing of the tumultuous going on in Churchill’s mind, the Chiefs and Churchill complemented each other. Churchill brought illumination, which his Chiefs brought into focus. Churchill never seriously considered sacking any of them, and none of them ever seriously considered resigning. In his capacity as Minister of Defence he never overrode their policies. Anthony Eden wrote that attending a meeting with Churchill was “a splendid and unique experience. It might be a monologue. It was never a dictatorship.”

Colville noted the criticisms leveled at Churchill by the Chiefs of Staff who, in Colville’s opinion, lacked Churchill’s “imagination and resolution” and could not see that it was Churchill who provided them “guidance and purpose.” The Chiefs and Churchill worked together in harness, the black steed of Churchill’s passion and the white steeds of the coolly logical Brooke, Cunningham, and Portal. Clementine Churchill later said of Brooke, “We might have won the war without Alanbrooke; I don’t think we would have won it without Winston.”

1965: Bladon

Mr. Reid’s conclusion was praised by his hard-bitten editors. Truly, it could not have been improved upon….

★ Queen Elizabeth II honored Churchill by her presence in St. Paul’s. She was joined by representatives from more than 110 nations, including four kings, a queen, five heads of state and sixteen prime ministers. Charles De Gaulle, wearing a plain kept and simple uniform, unadorned with insignia, medals or ribbons, stood a head taller than all present as the great Imperial ceremony began.

From St. Paul’s the coffin was taken by motor launch up the Thames to Waterloo. There it was put aboard one of five Pullman coaches pulled by the Battle of Britain class locomotive Winston S. Churchill for the sixty-mile journey to the Oxfordshire village of Bladon and the little churchyard of St. Martin’s, within sight of the spires of Blenheim palace, where the story had begun. Lord Moran, finding in the end his literary voice, wrote: “And at Bladon, in a country churchyard, in the stillness of a winter evening, in the presence of his family and a few friends, Winston Churchill was committed to the English earth, which in his finest hour, he had held inviolate.”

Porch met Lady Randolph in Rome in 1914. He was thirty-seven, she was sixty, but she still had the dazzle that had captivated Lord d’Abernon three decades earlier: “…a dark, lithe figure… radiant, translucent, intense. A diamond star in her hair, her favourite ornament—its lustre dimmed by the flashing glory of her eyes. More the panther than the woman in her look….”

Freshly divorced from George Cornwallis-West, Jennie suggested he go dance with the younger girls, but Monty was smitten. He pursued her for years, their friendship warmed. In the spring of 1918 they shared an idyllic fortnight in Ireland, and married in June.

Jennie’s son Winston said he “hoped marriage wouldn’t become the vogue among ladies of his mother’s age,” but he and Jack were glad for their mother. At the wedding Winston told Porch, “You’ll never regret you married her.”

Monty had ignored official duties during his romance, and soon had to return to Nigeria, Jennie unable to join him because of wartime travel restrictions. He hurried back as soon as he could to “step out” with her in London society—whose amused whispers Jennie characteristically scorned: “They say, What do they say? Let them say!” And, memorably: “He has a future and I have a past, so we should be all right.”

There were fortunes to be made in Africa, and Monty needed money to support his famously extravagant wife. In the spring of 1921, Winston and Jack financed his exploratory trip to the Gold Coast (now Ghana). He left Jennie for the last time, writing touching letters to his now-67-year-old spouse. At the end of May Jennie fell, breaking two bones. She recovered, but gangrene set in and a surgeon was forced to amputate her leg above the knee.

Porch, while doing well in Africa, was desperately anxious; Winston cabled him the news. Alas on June 29th Jennie suffered a sudden hemorrhage and died. Winston “was reported spending his days weeping.” Porch returned to an empty house and an empty life.

Distraught, he returned to Africa for a spell, then Italy where he remarried: this
time to a much younger woman!

Porch never forgot his first love. In old age he would sit admiring her famous sketch by John Singer Sargent, which he willed to Sir Winston; it has since passed to his great-grandson Randolph. He never lost his wonder, Parsons writes, that such a dazzling star had ever loved him. Finally he returned to Glastonbury, where he lived quietly with friends, died at 87 just two months before Winston, and was buried in a sadly unmarked grave.

The author confronts various fictions surrounding Porch and Churchill. The tallest tale is that WSC paid secret visits to Porch’s home in Glastonbury to get away from World War II. German Intelligence supposedly finds out, and parachutes Waffen SS troopers onto Glastonbury Tor “to capture Churchill, and also to seize the Holy Grail [allegedly entombed in the Tor] for Himmler while they were in the neighbourhood.” But a hot reception awaits and all are killed, “buried in secret on the moors, and the whole matter was hushed up!” I am delighted to see Mr. Parsons skewer such nonsense before it gets onto the Internet.

Monty lived “a charmed life,” the author writes: “A man of cultivated taste and enquiring mind, an archaeologist, an able administrator and businessman …generally quiet and undemonstrative…willing to dice with fame in return for love and approval; a man perhaps continually seeking a role and a place in the world, but never quite finding it.”

This is a remarkable monograph, not only on a little-known player in the Churchill drama, but on the society which bore him—and Jennie, and her sons—a society you must understand if you are really to understand the whole of Winston Churchill. Parsons offers unprecedented detail, and his well-written text is thoroughly documented, nicely illustrated and factual. I couldn’t begin to list all the details this little book offers on the personal life of the Churchill family in the Teens and Twenties. Email the author (he will accept cheques in U.S. and Canadian dollars) and order a copy.

Catalogue of the Uncanny


Churchill is more celebrated for his prophecies which came true—the two World Wars, becoming prime minister, the Nazi and Soviet threats, guided missiles, nuclear bombs, even cell phones—rather than the prophecies that didn’t—Anglo-American condominium, a settlement with the Soviets and a truly united British Commonwealth, not to mention the invulnerability of France, Tobruk, Singapore, and the survival of capital ships in concentrated air attacks.

James Humes compiles Churchill’s many accurate predictions, probably more than WSC would have labeled as such. “I always avoid prophesying beforehand,” he said in 1943, “because it is much better policy to prophesy after the event has already taken place.”

Although there is nothing new here, Mr. Humes has thoroughly plumbed the literature to produce a comprehensive catalogue. Twenty-eight chapters are subdivided into six parts: World War I (predicted as early as WSC’s school years); Military Weaponry (aircraft and tanks); Domestic Affairs (the age of technology, a “middle way” between capitalism and socialism); the Totalitarian Age (foreseen as early as his 1900 novel Savrola); World War II (Bolsheviks, Fascists, Nazis, the certainty of victory, his loss of the election); and the Cold War (Iron Curtain, United Europe, collective security, the Soviet collapse). I don’t think any major prediction that came true is left out.

I’ve criticized some of my old friend’s books for mangled or manufactured Churchill quotes and counterfactual history, so let me say this new book is admirably free of them. I found only three serious misquotes (to Hitler’s deputy about anti-Semitism, to Colville about Hitler invading Hell, and a minor omission in the Fulton speech).

There are however some misinterpretations. Hitler was not “in diapers” when Churchill wrote Savrola; WSC’s remarks about Islam in The River War were not “suppressed for political reasons.” Churchill’s famous memorandum predicting a German incursion into France should war break out in 1911 was not the reason for his being elevated to the Admiralty; if it were he would have gone to the War Office. It is quite a stretch to declare that if the Dardanelles plan had succeeded “Germany might have been defeated in 1915.” When Churchill hoped to “strangle Bolshevism in its cradle” he was Minister of War, not Munitions. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait did not emerge from the Cairo Treaty, though Iraq and Jordan did. I don’t think Churchill ever held a pilot’s license, nor that anyone called his grandson “Winston Churchill II.” And Sir Winston did not win the Nobel Prize for his History of the English-Speaking Peoples, which had not been published when he won it.

More serious perhaps is a chapter, “A Rare Miss,” on what Humes believes was the outstanding mis-prediction: that Churchill thought D-Day would fail and “up to the last minute” was urging “alternative invasion plans.”

This is silly. Churchill began seeking “a lodgment on the continent” in 1942, conceived of such ideas as the Mulberry Harbors (which Humes discusses), and was fully behind the invasion of France, which was postponed by Roosevelt, and for good reason. That Churchill had cold feet is an old Russian myth. At Teheran, Stalin questioned whether or not “the prime minister and the British staffs really believe in Overlord.” Churchill shot back: “It will be our stern duty to hurl across the Channel against the Germans every sinned of our strength”—despite his personal >>
A Rousing Good Picture Book

SUZANNE SIGMAN & AMY COHN

At last there is a picture book about Churchill we can recommend unre-
servedly. It is billed for ages 7-10, but children as young as five should find this
an intriguing and worthwhile story. The text features London, Churchill and
Rufus, his beloved miniature poodle.

The action begins with the advent of war in 1939 and culminates with
Churchill’s return to Chartwell in 1945. Along with the primary narrative,
Churchill’s own words tell a parallel story: a Churchill quote appears on most
double-page spreads. Together, these presentations paint a clear and insightful
picture of Churchill’s wartime leadership. For example, every day Rufus visits
“Winston’s secret office, hidden beneath the buildings of London. Messages
chatter through typewriters, and candy-colored phones rattle and ring. News
arrives from all corners of the globe.”

The Churchill quote incorporated into the illustration, from August 1940,
reads: “The road to victory may not be so long as we expect. But we have no
right to count upon this. Be it long or short, rough or smooth, we mean to
reach our journey’s end.”

Churchill speaks in the House of Commons, tours bombed London
neighborhoods, and waves from a balcony on V-E Day. Finally Churchill
“is no longer needed in the bunker. It’s time for a new beginning for him and
Rufus….They rest in the country at last, two war dogs.”

The book is notable for historical accuracy and the telling details that
capture a very particular time and place. The illustrations, all double-page
spreads, not only support the text—they extend it. Selbert, in her first book,
employed a muted, martial palette of greens, browns, grays, and blacks,
executed in somber acrylics. The London skyline at night, smoke-filled and
streaked with ash and cinders, and the dome of St. Paul’s still standing,
comprise the dramatic centerspread.

Minor nits are unimportant. Until 1978, speeches in the Commons were
not recorded, so microphones should not be there; the green benches in the
Commons are of leather, not velvet; Chequers should be called the prime
minister’s country house, rather than Churchill’s. The fact that Rufus surely
did not sit on the front bench while Churchill spoke in the Chamber, “his
tail drumming against the seat back,” we deem acceptable artistic license.

Back matter includes a 1939-45 timeline, a page on “Churchill and
Poodles,” another for “The Man Himself,” a book list, websites, a bibli-
ography and, most happily, “Quotation Sources.” It’s never too early to teach
another generation of potential scholars to document their quotations! &
Intelligence had a pretty good idea how the Turks would resist. But rather than highlight politics or inter-service squabbles, this well-illustrated volume focuses on the development and effective use of the forts, batteries and minefields that stopped the Allied fleet cold in March 1915. This was long before Allied landings on Gallipoli, and before Germans under the command of Gen. Liman von Sanders appeared on the battlefields.

Churchill crops up in several places in this narrative of the building, manning and eventual impact of what emerged as a highly effective Turkish system of coastal fortification. Forrest begins (briefly) with the castle-like forts built in the late 1600s, and carries the story through the Chanak crisis of 1922 that helped to bring down the Lloyd George government. The focus, however, is on the events of 1915.

Nine appendices offer details on the forts and the Allied ships that sought to get by them. Clear maps show how hopeless the attack really was. More minefields and numerous guns were in wait at the Narrows, had the Allied ships gotten that far.

The new battleship Queen Elizabeth, focus of Fisher’s frustration with Churchill that led to the admiral’s resignation in May 1915, figures in several places, as does the old French battleship Bouvet, whose loss began to turn the Allies back from their mid-March attack. Contrary to many defenders of the operation, Turkish ammunition was not running out—“evidence now shows that ammunition stocks after the attack were far from low” (138).

This is not a rehash of the 1915 Gallipoli campaign, but rather a useful study of why that subsequent ground attack proved necessary. For it became clear to the naval leadership on the scene that the only way to silence the many guns and clear the fearsome minefields was with a ground campaign, costly failure that it turned out to be.

The end of the book offers details for touring the many existing fortification ruins and reconstructions along both shorelines of the Dardanelles.

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Churchill Fiction


Orders from Berlin, by Simon Tolkien. Minotaur, hardbound, 320 pages, $26, Amazon $17.08, Kindle $12.99. Portrayal ★★ Worth Reading ★★

Maggie Hope (Mr. Churchill’s Secretary) is back. And as Churchill growled to her in her earlier role, “We could use some help in this office.” Maggie has now been recruited by MI-5 and is undergoing training in Scotland when this second adventure begins.

Both books are well-written mysteries set in a realistic 1940 London—real page-turners with plots and counterplots galore. Both feature many actual historical characters alongside fictional ones. Princess Elizabeth’s Spy has SS foreign intelligence chief Walter Schellenberg, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, the King and Queen and their two Princesses and, of course, Churchill. Orders from Berlin features the SS number two man Reinhard Heydrich, Goering, Hitler and Churchill.

There are two differences. One is that MacNeal uses a female protagonist, Tolkien a male—a Scotland Yard detective named Trave (no first name) who appeared in two earlier novels. More importantly, MacNeal is far superior to Tolkien in defining her historical characters. She knows Churchill well and has taken pains to portray him realistically. Schellenberg and the Windsors are only on stage in the prologue, but seem true to life when Schellenberg offers the Royal couple a bribe. But when Maggie is sent to Windsor Castle to tutor Princess Elizabeth as an MI-5 cover for ferreting out a German spy in the Royal entourage, MacNeal’s portrayals of the 14-year-old Princess (“Lilibet”) and her younger sister Margaret are delightful.

MacNeal’s plot involves a Nazi conspiracy to kidnap Princess Elizabeth to clear the way for the Duke of Windsor to resume the throne after the Nazis invade England, so he can urge his subjects to accept German occupation, like good little Frenchmen. The conspiracy comes closer to fruition than anyone could imagine and Maggie and Lilibet see a lot of harrowing action. And everyone knows HM the Queen was one tough, resourceful young woman.

I noticed a phrase, “KpO,” ascribed to Churchill and defined as “Keep Plodding On.” FH readers know the acronym “KBO” (Keep Buggering On), but “KPO” has its place also. Author MacNeal referred me to Martin Gilbert’s In Search of Churchill, which says WSC used both acronyms interchangeably. KPO is also quoted in Colville’s diaries; evidently it was a cleaned-up version of the better-known line.

In Orders from Berlin Heydrich persuades Hitler to let him assassinate Churchill, using a highly-placed German spy in MI-6. With Churchill gone, he believes, England will be more willing to listen to the Führer’s generous peace terms. But Tolkien’s portrayals of Heydrich, Goering, Hitler and Churchill do not bring these historical characters to life in the same way that MacNeal does, or as Philip Kerr does with his historical characters in Hitler’s Peace (FH 156). Still, Tolkien’s research is good, and the details ring mostly true, but there are exceptions:

At one point, Reinhard Heydrich reminisces about Hitler’s stabilizing the German currency in 1934, after only a year in office. In fact, Weimar Germany had a stable currency a decade earlier: German hyperinflation ended in January 1924. I’ve seen this same mistake in more than one historical novel about Germany. In another scene, an MI-6 agent declines a drink; Churchill “eyes the man with a look of distrust.” I doubt WSC judged people so superficially. But you won’t be disappointed by either of these books.

Novels are rated one to three stars on two questions: Is the Churchill portrayal accurate? Is the book worth reading? Mr. McMenamin and his son Patrick are co-authors of the Churchill thrillers The DeValera Deception, The Parsifal Pursuit and The Gemini Agenda, set during 1929-39.
Explanations first. I’m not a professional historian, not a theorist of politics and political leadership, not a military expert, not a specialist in rhetoric or media. So I am a little daunted to talk in this company about Winston Churchill, whose achievements deserve all of that expertise and more.

I am relieved to be speaking about something I like, know and care about—why rare books matter, and what they can do, and to tell you about a recent generous gift to this state’s flagship university, a hundred miles up the road in Columbia.

Libraries like ours at the University of South Carolina are built over time. We’ve been collecting books for over 200 years. We had the first freestanding college library building in America, and last year the Rare Books Department moved into a brand new building, the Hollings Special Collections Library. I won’t linger on this point, but we are proud of the collections and what we can now do with them.

Shortly before we moved, Dr. Conyers O’Bryan, a distinguished cardiologist and longtime trustee of the Medical University here in Charleston, gave the University of South Carolina his Winston Churchill collection. As some of you will know, collections like Dr. O’Bryan’s are not built lightly or in a hurry. The collection honors Churchill the leader, but it also embodies Churchill the writer and Churchill the artist.

It brought to the University over eighty volumes of Churchill’s own writings: first editions, early books, books in fine bindings, inscribed and signed books, even books presented to Churchill and books from his library at Chartwell. And it also brought important artwork and memorabilia, including a signed photograph, a great engraving of Churchill as wartime prime minister, and an original Churchill oil painting from the 1930s. We’ve brought selected items here for the conference, and I hope you’ll come and see them in one of the breaks.

Based on the O’Bryan Collection, I have quite a simple idea or message to deliver, especially to those who themselves collect Churchillian. It’s this: rare books are not just for advanced research. They are unique assets for teachers, especially at the undergraduate level.

Most of us, certainly most Britons of my generation, have always known of Churchill, known the Churchill story, almost taken for granted his central role in history. In prep school, I lined up for “means” under his portrait and a framed letter. For a school competition, the Churchill Prize, I learned by heart a poem from World War I that Churchill himself made...
famous when he recited it at the poet’s memorial service in St Paul’s Cathedral:

If I should die, think only this of me,
That there’s some corner of a foreign field,
That is forever England.

When Churchill returned to office as prime minister in 1951, it seemed simply the restoration of a natural order of things. Where I went to college, Churchill’s father had been a student; Churchill himself was an honorary fellow, and a young Martin Gilbert was a junior research fellow embarking on his life’s work. Churchill was simply a fact of life.

I’m surely not alone in retaining a vivid memory of the great State Funeral in 1965 when the dome of St. Paul’s, symbol of Britain’s survival through the Blitz, echoed with The Battle Hymn of the Republic. We felt it not as a funeral, but as the end of an era.

But that was nearly fifty years ago. How do we convey to a new generation this sense of Churchill as the last great forest tree towering over his contemporaries? Where do we begin? Rare books have something special to offer. The scale and range of Churchill’s achievements, symbolized by his collected writings, the thirty-eight volumes of his collected works and essays, is simply overwhelming. Students don’t have the context or background to begin. But they can be intrigued or puzzled by historical objects, and rare books are not just texts or sources—they are things, historic things, that can be touched and that provoke wonder. Rare books can be entry points to a world many students hardly know.

Here are some suggestions:

Students are surprised how often Churchill’s life touched the same geographical flashpoints as our own time. I’ve been told I can’t get away with labeling young Winston “the Forrest Gump of the Victorian Empire,” so I won’t try. But what historical chain, one wonders, leads from the horsemen of the Mahdi, against whom Churchill fought with the 21st Lancers at Omdurman in 1898, and the mounted Janjaweed militia of modern Darfur?

Contemporary materials in their original format, ephemeral pamphlets and the like, show us Churchill as his contemporaries saw him. In a big research library, a single resource like the O’Bryan Collection is extended by relevant material in related collections—such as Bernard Baruch’s 80th birthday letter to Churchill, a World War II propaganda magazine with an article on Winston Churchill as orator, and an issue of the British Gazette, the newspaper he edited for the government during the General Strike of 1926.

Historical anniversaries provide hooks or opportunities for exhibits, and the upcoming centenary of World War I will provide a five-year window for talking about Churchill, as will the 50th anniversary of his death.

Perhaps surprisingly, students are fascinated by books as physical objects—both books in original condition, as their first readers saw them, and the ones in Dr. O’Bryan’s amazing special Cosway bindings. Flip this Cosway binding, and there is our author’s signature under glass, inlaid in the back cover. >>
The issue to make young people think about is what this transformation of binding might mean. What does it say about Churchill that political speeches, printed cheaply on acidic newsprint in 1910, would be treasured enough by the 1960s to be gilt-decorated and rebound in full navy morocco? His works are, obviously, precious.

The O’Bryan Collection includes several signed or inscribed books. One was inscribed to Churchill by the King of Denmark after the war, in 1950. By itself the signature says little, until one starts asking how very different the wartime experience had been in the Scandinavian countries, what Churchill’s attitude was toward postwar European development, and why Denmark should especially have valued WSC. In looking for the back-story of the inscription, the physical object becomes an entry-point.

Another inscription (actually an inserted letter from Churchill) shows a different, less public side of his character. It sends best wishes and a signed copy of his autobiography to the policeman on the door at the House of Commons who was about to retire.

Objects like a silver pillbox make great puzzlers for students, because they provide no words to tell you what they mean. Ours was given to Churchill in 1955 as a birthday present by his lifelong friend and admirer, Lady Violet Bonham-Carter. It raises all kinds of speculations about the trade-off, as leaders age, between the constraints of health and the benefits of experience. What kind of pills would Churchill have carried round with him in the 1950s? It’s a searchable question—but unlike a book, a pillbox doesn’t answer the questions it provokes.

The greatest entry point for modern students re-
The Voice itself, in the immortal wartime speeches. The Churchill Centre website keeps recordings available to use with the printed texts. It’s still a puzzle how words so shaped our world and our future—and even more a puzzle how words can evoke deep latent shared values and deep resolve in those who hear them. But Churchill had been honing his skills with words for fifty years before he became prime minister. Simply to read or hear those speeches now is to tap into his time and his greatness.

A local connection also helps to make historic materials speak to new audiences. The famous poem quoted by Churchill in his broadcast on 27 April 1941 has a Charleston connection: The poet, Arthur Hugh Clough, was raised in Charleston on East Bay Street. There’s a memorial to him down on the battery. And if you go in the back gate of St. Michael’s Churchyard, there’s a gravestone carrying another poem he wrote—memorial verses on his brother who died here in 1841.

Churchill quoted Clough’s poem “Say Not the Struggle Naught Availeth,” which was first published in America in the 1850s. Most remembered is the last line. Churchill had used the line twenty-five years earlier, when America entered World War I. But this time, in 1941, he also quotes two full stanzas in which Clough recalls long, hot South Carolina summers on the beach at Sullivan’s Island:

\[
\text{For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,} \\
\text{Seem here no painful inch to gain,} \\
\text{Far back, through creeks and inlets making,} \\
\text{ Comes silent, flooding in, the main.} \\
\]

\[
\text{And not by eastern windows only,} \\
\text{When daylight comes, comes in the light;} \\
\text{In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly!} \\
\text{But westward, look, the land is bright.} \\
\]

Clough’s words encapsulate one of the great strands in Churchill’s vision: the need to see not just the directionless eddying, the to-and-fro, of day-to-day events, but the great currents of human history.

Clearly, rare books are not just for specialist research. They can be the entry points through which undergraduates first encounter history at first hand. If you are yourself a Churchill collector, at least consider helping a local college begin to gather interesting provocative original Churchill material that can play this role in its students’ education. Collections no longer have to be exhaustive to be useful—much if not all of the context for further student research is or soon will be available in digital form. But the rare book or letter, the signed edition, the physical object, has a unique role to play in initiating such interest.

Stop by and visit the O’Bryan Collection, and see if I am right.

See it all at http://www.sc.edu/library/spcoll/rarebook.htm
Each quiz offers questions in six categories:
Churchill contemporaries (C), literary matters (L), miscellaneous (M), personal details (P), statesmanship (S) and war (W), the easier questions first. Can you reach Level 1?

LEVEL 4
1. “I watched him with fascinated eyes while, with his cigar firmly wedged in the corner of his mouth, he threw off jewelled phrases with the nonchalance of an 18th century Polish nobleman....” Whom was Bruce Lockhart describing, circa 1929? (M)
2. Who was the first serving British Prime Minister to visit the United States? (M)
3. Eddie Marsh once heard his chief in the next room announcing on the telephone: “It’s Eddie Marsh speaking. Back Dares- devil for the St. Leger for me at £ — .” Who was his chief? (M)
4. In what year did Churchill become Prime Minister for the first time? (S)
5. To whom did Churchill cable on 12 May 1945, “An iron curtain is drawn down upon their front”? (S)
6. On what occasion did Churchill write: “When you have to kill a man, it costs nothing to be polite”? (W)

LEVEL 3
7. When writing on South Africa in 1902 for The Morning Post, the editor allowed Churchill to correct proofs. In one instance, with what did he replace “Cheers” at the end of one of his speeches? (P)
8. At the Author’s Club in 1908 Churchill said: “Someone—I forget who—has said: ‘Words are the only things which last for ever.’” Whom was he quoting? (L)
9. What was Churchill’s favourite period of English history? (L)
10. J.C.C. Davidson to Stanley Baldwin, 6 May 1926: “[Churchill] thinks he is Napoleon, but curiously enough the men who have been printing all their life in the various processes happen to know more about their job than he does.” To what Churchill role did he refer? (M)
11. In his broadcast on 24 August 1941, Churchill said: “We are in the presence of a crime without a name.” What crime? (W)
12. In June 1954 Churchill told a group of senators and congressmen, “___ is a tyrant, but meeting jaw to jaw is better than war.” What was the tyrant? (W)

LEVEL 2
13. Who described Hitler as “the George Washington of Germany” after meeting him in 1936? (C)
14. What condition did Churchill impose when invited to exhibit some of his paintings at the Royal Academy in 1947? (P)

LEVEL 1
15. Of which Admiral, who died on Trafalgar Day, 21 October 1943, did Churchill write: “He had been a true comrade to me, both at the Admiralty and on the Chiefs of Staff Committee.” (C)
16. Of which 1939 book did Churchill write in his foreword: “It is one of the best books which have been written about the Great War”? (L)
17. Who gave Churchill the complete works of Sainte-Beuve as a wedding present in August 1908? (P)
18. When welcoming U.S. Ambassador Winant in March 1941, to what did WSC refer as “an ocean-borne trumpet call that we are no longer alone”? (S)

Answers
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19. Why did WSC write the King in June 1940: “Mr Bracken….has sometimes been almost my sole supporter in the years when I have been striving to get this country properly defended…He has suffered, as I have done, every form of official hostility”? (C)
20. Who wrote to Churchill in October 1930: “You are an interesting cuss—I, a dull dog”? (C)
21. When did Churchill end a speech about the nuclear deterrent with “...never flinch, never weary, never despair”? (S)
22. Churchill was a member of four London clubs. Name any or all. (P)
23. Dangerously ill in December 1943, WSC told his daughter Sarah, “If I die, don’t worry, the war is won.” He then asked her to read him a Jane Austen novel. Which one? (L)
24. To whom did WSC cable from Washington in September 1943: “This is a time to play high. Improvise and dare”? (W)
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What is now The Churchill Centre began with commemorative postage stamps. Celwyn Ball’s brilliant new catalogue completes our original mission in 1968: to illustrate and identify every commemorative ever issued. Read about this monument in Churchill Studies on page 48.