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PO Box 945, Downers Grove, IL 60515
Tel. (888) WSC-1874 • Fax (312) 658-6088
info@winstonchurchill.org

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**AT THE CHURCHILL WAR ROOMS**
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Justin Reash
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COVER

Oscar Nemon’s bust is now in the capitals of the Big Three World War II Allies. Story on page 32.
SCAVONE PHOTOGRAPHY
**WSC: THE BEST SPEECHES**

I’ve always thought *FH* superb, but “Gadflies, Gods and Presidents” (FH 160:11) resonated strongly. With three young children, I do not get to as many events as I would like, even though I have been a member since arriving in Britain in 1999. But I have upgraded my support for the Churchill Centre UK and am especially pleased to have got to know Allen Packwood. I am now going to download from our website the list of speeches you recommend in your article.

JAMES AITKEN, LONDON

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**GASSED UP**

“Leading Myths” on Churchill and Lethal Gas (FH 160:26) was very well done. It ought to drive a stake through the heart of this particular canard. But journalists being what they are, it probably won’t.

PROF RAYMOND CALLAHAN, NEWARK, DEL.

**CHURCHILL AND HOOVER**

Many thanks for your good words and for taking notice of my *Freedom Betrayed* in Dantan Wernecke’s “Herbert Hoover’s Critique of Winston Churchill” (FH 160:19). I thought the writer was thoughtful, respectful, and raised appropriate points of comparison between Churchill and Hoover. I also much appreciated the very gracious reference to my editing.

PROF GEORGE H. NASH, WEST BRANCH, IA.

I was surprised to read that former President Hoover had written of the Second World War, and believed Stalin more dangerous to Britain than Hitler. Hitler not Stalin made war on Britain; to have failed to choose sides against Hitler would have amounted to surrender. Hoover’s contention that the United States should not have gone to war against Hitler’s Germany similarly ignores that Germany declared war on the United States and did everything possible to annihilate Western civilization. However bad Communism was, Stalin didn’t attack the West. Stalin’s aggrandizement at the end of the Second World War was largely reversed by the outcome of the Cold War. Britain was right in aiding the USSR in its fight with their common enemy.

SHANIN SPECTER, PHILADELPHIA

*Editor’s response:* FH’s contention in the Hitler vs. Stalin debate has always been that Churchill chose the right enemy, since Stalin’s ambitions through 1939 did not extend beyond his borders. But there’s another side. As Anthony Montague Browne put it in his address to us in 1985: “It was only a few years previous that the Russians had concluded that hangman’s pact with Nazi Germany, closely followed by their cynical attack on Poland, and then on Finland and the Baltic States…Then there was the German U-boat base on Russian soil near Murmansk that didn’t get much publicity…The Soviet press gloated over every British defeat—and there were plenty to gloat over.”

Hoover’s concern was primarily the U.S., and he did support war on Germany in December 1941. Up to then he advocated all-out aid to Britain while arming the U.S. to the teeth. Had that been done, his supporters argue, the U.S. would have better withstood the Axis onslaught of 1942.

**CHURCHILL AND WILSON**

Justin Lyons’ “Winston Churchill’s Critique of Woodrow Wilson” (FH 160:12) is an excellent analysis of Wilson’s philosophy. One of Wilson’s Fourteen Points Churchill could not accept, which was not mentioned in Lyons’ article, was: “2. Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas, outside territorial waters, alike in peace and in war, except as the seas may be closed in whole or in part by international action for the enforcement of international covenants.” Since Britain lives or dies by the sea, Churchill and others could accept no restrictions that limited Britain in the name of “freedom of navigation.”

DAVID DRUCKMAN, CHICAGO

*Professor Lyons replies:* Mr. Druckman is quite correct. See for example Churchill’s *The Aftermath*, Chapter VI “The Fourteen Points” (New York: Scribners, 1929), 103-09.
Datelines

Hitler Wins One
MOUNTAINVIEW, CALIF, DECEMBER 16TH—Silicon Valley proclaims Adolf Hitler seventh on a new table of significant persons, while Sir Winston Churchill ranks a mere 37th, according to Tom Kelly in the Daily Mail. One wonders where Hitler would rank if Churchill hadn’t been around in 1940.

The list was created by a Google engineer using similar systems to the way the search engine ranks web pages. The program mainly draws on how significant someone’s entry is on internet encyclopedia Wikipedia as well as mentions on online newspaper reports, books published on the web and other parts of the Internet. (Must Google organize everything?)

Elizabeth I (13th) is the highest ranking woman, three slots before Queen Victoria. These plus Joan of Arc are the only women in the top 100. Poor Nelson Mandela ends up 356th. Shakespeare (4th) is the highest-ranking Briton. Prime Minister David Cameron, slated for certain obscurity, is 1483rd. The top three are Jesus, Napoleon and the Prophet Muhammad.

The system gives equal weight to “both celebrity and gravitas,” but aims to assess people’s long-term fame by including a “reputation decay” mathematical formula which predicts their impact up to 200 years after they die. Britney Spears would be ranked 27th on her current fame, but drops to 689th with the “decay formula.”

Two hundred years from now, if history is not over, people will remember Churchill. We’re not betting on Britney Spears.

Companion Thanks Judy and Suzanne

The Churchill Companion, our new ready-reference book of facts, was made possible by the inventiveness of Suzanne Sigman (Milton, Mass.) and the generosity of Judy and the late Jerry Kambestad (Santa Ana, Calif.). We failed to acknowledge them in the book, and want to rectify that here.

Suzanne Sigman, former education programs coordinator, repeatedly reminded us how useful it would be for teachers and students to have reference information to unfamiliar terms and customs in Churchill’s day. From pound-dollar ratios to by-elections, she was always being asked: “what does that mean in today’s terminology?”

Suzanne showed us a laminated, multi-panel, fold-out guide to local birds, thinking we could adapt to basic Churchill facts. Little did she contemplate 126 pages on everything from family tree to funeral, myths to medals, residences to racehorses!

Judy and Jerry Kambestad made a substantial contribution to a commemorative booklet which, for one reason or another, we never got round to publishing. When an opportunity came to fund the Companion we obtained her permission to use their donation.

The Churchill Companion is truly indispensable. Order yours (paperback or spiral-bound) on Amazon.

Seventy-Five Years On
LONDON, JANUARY 7TH—The New Statesman Archive published a significant interview of Winston Churchill by Kingsley Martin, then its editor, on 7 January 1939, two months before Hitler occupied the remains of Czechoslovakia, Chamberlain guaranteed Poland, and the march to World War II began. The interview includes hitherto obscure and riveting remarks by Churchill on the nature of democracy, armaments as a deterrent to war, and the question of whether the British people were really prepared to resist Hitler, scarcely twenty years after the slaughter of World War I.

Some of Churchill’s reflections are quoted in the introductory article >>

Quotation of the Season
I AM CONVINCED THAT THERE IS NOTHING [THE RUSSIANS] ADMIRE SO MUCH AS STRENGTH, AND THERE IS NOTHING FOR WHICH THEY HAVE LESS RESPECT THAN WEAKNESS....WE CANNOT AFFORD...TO WORK ON NARROW MARGINS, OFFERING TEMPTATIONS TO A TRIAL OF STRENGTH.”

—WSC, FULTON, MISSOURI, 5 MARCH 1946
Tonyandy Vindication
CARDIFF, WALES, FEBRUARY 5TH—A memo by Churchill rubbingishng claims he wanted troops to use ammunition to crack down on rioting Welsh miners is to be auctioned. Churchill, then Home Secretary sent it to A.G. Gardiner, then editor of The Daily News, in response to suggestions he was ready to let troops open fire. Gardiner had advised Churchill that a “left-leaning correspondent” claimed WSC “has sent an order to Pembroke Dock Arsenal to get ready several thousand rounds of ball ammunition for the use of the troops drafted into South Wales.”

Churchill replied: “My dear Gardiner, Give no credence to such rubbish. I do not anticipate any shooting and have taken some responsibility to that end which Liberal newspapers should recognise.” The undated memo was probably written on 9 November 1910.

On November 8th a demonstration of striking miners in Tonyandy Square in Cardiff had been broken up by local police. Though there were calls to send in the army, Churchill instead sent a detachment of Metropolitan Police and cavalry. (See “Leading Churchill Myths,” FH 140, Autumn 2008, 11.)

The Director of the Churchill Archives Centre, Allen Packwood, said: “Churchill’s attitude is consistent all the way through his life. It’s ‘in war, resolution; in victory, magnanimity.”’ Churchill’s actions may well have prevented the situation getting worse. But the incident haunted Churchill for the rest of his career and “Tonyandy” became shorthand for what his critics saw as an anti-trade union stance.

—DARREN DEVINE, WALES ONLINE
(www.walesonline.co.uk)

Turing Pardoned
LONDON, DECEMBER 16TH—HM The Queen granted a rare “mercy pardon” to Alan Turing, the computing and mathematics pioneer whose chemical castration for being homosexual drove him to suicide almost sixty years ago (see back cover, FH 149).

Turing, one of the leading scientific geniuses of the 20th century, cracked the supposedly impregnable German Enigma code in World War II, and is considered by many the father of modern computer science. Aged 23, Turing had hypothesized what would become today’s computers—the Turing Machine, which could emulate any computing device or program. Almost eighty years later, Turing Machines are still used in theoretical computation.

But homosexuality at that time was a crime in Britain, and instead of being hailed as one of the crucial figures in defeating the Nazis, he was convicted in 1952 of “gross indecency” for having had sex with a man. His security clearance was revoked, he was barred from government service, and he was chemically castrated. Less than two years later, in 1954, he killed himself with cyanide, aged only 41.

In recent decades, as Turing’s ideas and work have come to be recognized as the foundations of today’s technology-driven world, scientists and technology leaders lobbied for him to be pardoned.

—ALEX JOHNSON, NBC NEWS

Edward on the War
LONDON, DECEMBER 12TH—The Daily Mail reveals a 1970 letter by the Duke of Windsor, the former King Edward VIII, which they say expresses the Duke’s belief that he might have been able to prevent the Second World War if he had not abdicated. But Edward’s actual letter, to author Gerald Hamilton, simply says: “Whether or not I could have prevented World War II had I remained King is an impossible. At least I used any influence I had to warn against the folly of another holocaust.”

“Where I clashed with Baldwin and his cronies was that I was not really of the Establishment which I was supposed to be,” the Duke continues. “That aroused their suspicions that I would not always ‘yes’ them, which indeed I would not have!”

The Duke also states his opinion of Churchill: “Great orator and writer, yes, and imbued with insatiable ambition. No outstanding peace time
Bush by Brush
MIDLAND, TEXAS, NOVEMBER 22ND—Former President George W. Bush has taken up painting since reading Sir Winston’s book, Painting as a Pastime. Although the past-President has kept a low profile since 2009, his appearance on “The Tonight Show” with Jay Leno revealed a much happier Bush, who says he wants to paint like Churchill.

Churchill Day 2014?
BUXTON, DERBYSHIRE, NOVEMBER 10TH—Edmund Bradbury is calling on the government to designate a special day to mark the 140th birthday of Sir Winston. In 2013 Bradbury organised a tribute to the Dambuster pilots and the local airmen who participated in that daring raid during World War II. Bradbury has raised his Churchill idea with Member of Parliament Andrew Bingham.

“We do not have a reading culture as a nation. Churchill implored, ‘Study history, study history. In history lie all the secrets of statecraft.’ The underlying problem could be the way the arts are taught in our schools. I remember losing patience when my history teacher dictated notes. Perhaps she did not inject enough fanfare and romanticism into her lessons.” The nation is Kenya, the writer Njeri Kiereni in The Standard (Nairobi), 10 November. Kiereni adds: “...today, fifty years old, four presidents later, a new Constitution, more women in government, a free press, freedom of expression and much more, I feel a vacuum in leadership.” Et tu, Kenya?

Churchill is “my favorite figure of all time,” Harbaugh said. “As the decades go on, the world appreciates his leadership, his character, the titanium in his spine, the iron will of Winston Churchill.” The Niners beat Jacksonville 28-0.—Charles Montgomery on Churchillchat.

John Lennon’s middle name was Winston. Mark Lewisohn in Tune In, the first of three volumes on the Beatles, writes that the front room at Mendips, Lennon’s childhood home, contained “a full bookshelf that included A History of the English-Speaking Peoples and The Second World War, ten leather-bound folio editions John said he’d read, and had.” (Thanks for this to Elliot Berke.)

Politico says: “Senator Ted Cruz is, to paraphrase Winston Churchill’s quip about Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, a bull who carries a china shop with him.” Cruz instituted a 21-hour-long speech in an attempt to stop the Affordable Care Act, a kamikaze reminder of Churchill’s vain attempt to salvage Edward VIII in 1936. Both acts deserved top marks for fortitude and zero for strategy, but Churchill was more decorous. Cruz compared Senator Harry Reid to the Hitler appeasers, while Reid pleasantly referred to Cruz as a terrorist. Cruz’s grassroots cheered, continued Politico: “They are desperate for gumption and imagination and, above all, fight.” Fight is fine, but Churchill retained his sense of humor and collegiality.

“A politician; only war seemed to inspire him to brilliant leadership. He was a man without fear, and as he once told me he was never bored.”

The former King had controversial links with Hitler and is thought to have had fascist sympathies. His note was written at his home in Paris to thank Hamilton for sending him and the Duchess a copy of his 1969 book, The Way It Was with Me.

Hugo Vickers, cited as an expert by the Daily Mail, adds: “The line about whether he could have prevented war breaking out is an interesting one. In 1937 Edward went to Germany to see Hitler on the advice of someone high up in the U.S. Embassy in London. Edward honestly thought he could talk Hitler out of war which was pretty stupid but he felt that he had given it his best shot. It is a fascinating letter as it shows the Duke rewriting history as he wanted it remembered.”

The San Francisco 49ers played a U.S. football game on 27 October in Wembley Stadium, London, where coach Jim Harbaugh said he used Churchill’s words to inspire his team. This is a team tradition: former Niners athletic coach Johnny Parker spoke about inspiring football players with Churchill at our 1995 Boston conference. Churchill is “my favorite figure of all time,” Harbaugh said. “As the decades go on, the world appreciates his leadership, his character, the titanium in his spine, the iron will of Winston Churchill.” The Niners beat Jacksonville 28-0.—Charles Montgomery on Churchillchat.

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Official Biography Reaches Volume 25
Hillsdale College Press Publishes Testing Times, 1942

Sir Martin Gilbert’s biography, the longest in history, takes a giant step toward completion as Hillsdale College Press publishes The Churchill Documents: Testing Times 1942—the first document volume supporting biographic volume 7 (1942-1945), seventeenth in a projected twenty-three document volumes, and twenty-fifth in all counting the eight volumes of biography.

This is the first new volume since The Ever-Widening War 1941, published fourteen years ago. Since then, supported by friends and donors of Hillsdale College, H.C.P. has republished all eight of the biographic and the previous sixteen document volumes. Churchill Centre Chairman Laurence Geller aided the new volume by a kind gift to support Sir Martin’s work.

Churchill Centre members may buy all twenty-five volumes at a 30% discount, all seventeen document volumes at 20% discount, and Document Volume 17 at $51, a 15% discount off the cover price. Provide proof of membership when you order from Hillsdale’s bookshop: http://bit.ly/1fJ3nYL. (Note: the discount will not appear on your confirmation, but will be given when the order is processed.)

The contents of this volume cannot be underestimated. Here are the papers Churchill wrote and reviewed during the grimmest year of the war, with the Axis powers supreme. The reader looks over Churchill’s shoulder during his North American visit after Pearl Harbor, the fall of Singapore and Tobruk, his visit to Moscow and a Stalin clamoring for a Second Front, the counterattack in North Africa, the desperate Battle of the Atlantic, the turn of the tide at El Alamein and Stalingrad.

The Churchill world owes a vast debt to Larry Arnn, Hillsdale president and editor in chief who, early in his career, was Sir Martin Gilbert’s research assistant, and actually met his wife in the process. Devoted to Sir Martin’s life’s work, Dr. Arnn was determined that the biography be completed. He remained “undaunted by odds,” eventually met his wife in the process. Devoted to Sir Martin’s life’s work, Dr. Arnn was determined that the biography be completed. He remained “undaunted by odds,” in-...
meant to them, the school and to his home town of Corby.

Mr. Soames, a former defence minister, said: “When we remember James, let us remember that it is the soldier, not the reporter, who has given us freedom of the press; it is the soldier, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech; it is the soldier, not the student activist, who has given us the freedom to demonstrate; it is the soldier, not the lawyer, who has given us the right to a fair trial; it is the soldier who salutes the flag, and who thus permits the protestor to burn the flag.” Kerry Ashworth presented the inaugural James Ashworth Award to student James Keogh, a member of the cadet unit, for his outstanding contribution to the academy.

—HELEN O’NEILL, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE TELEGRAPH

Barroso: Show Courage
BRUSSELS, NOVEMBER 8TH— David Cameron and other European Union leaders need to show the same political courage and vision of Winston Churchill’s call for “a kind of United States of Europe,” says President José Manuel Barroso of the European Commission.

“He was a man of foresight with an acute sense of history, often ahead of prevailing opinion, never shying away from saying what some might choose to ignore,” Barroso remarked. “In today’s fast-changing world, we certainly need the same geopolitical intelligence and strategic vision. We need the same courage to think beyond the immediacy of the next news cycle.”

In comments seen as an implicit criticism of Prime Minister Cameron, Mr. Barroso called on current leaders to show Churchillian vision and courage: “Churchill rightly said in 1948: ‘We must aim at nothing less than the Union of Europe as a whole, and we look forward with confidence to the day when the Union will be achieved. We need to resist vested interests and short-termism. We need to have the courage to think ahead and be able to project and shape change—that’s what leadership is about.’”

Martin Callanan MEP, leader of Cameron’s European Conservatives and Reform group, said: “Barroso’s comments perfectly illustrate the failings of the EU elite: they are clinging to 1940s federalist ideology that does not work in the 21st century. The attitude that only more European integration is the answer has ironically been the greatest cause of division across Europe over the past twenty years. Someone [not Churchill –ed.] said, ‘Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.’ On that basis, EU federalist ambitions have been a great success.”

Nigel Farage, leader of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), accused Barroso of “hijacking a single phrase by Churchill” and taking it out of context “to paint him as a fan of political union in Europe. Churchill was the man who spoke of the importance of English-speaking peoples, the Commonwealth, and an island nation determined to stop the German-domination of Europe. Churchill once said, ‘Each time we must choose between Europe and the open sea, we shall always choose the open sea.’”

Mr. Farage is annoyingly critical of Mr. Barroso, who might indeed welcome the vision of him jumping into the open sea, but his quote is out of context too. WSC’s grandson Winston Churchill noted in FH 109: “this quote is from de Gaulle’s version of a wartime row with Churchill, and the true context is made clear in the next sentence: ‘And if I have to choose between you and Roosevelt, I shall always choose Roosevelt.’”

Democracy’s Problem
AUCKLAND, NOVEMBER 27TH— “In 1947 Winston Churchill famously declared, ‘it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried.’ It >>
would take a brave person to disagree with him,” writes Stephen Mills on the New Zealand politics blog stuff.co.nz. “But then he had not seen how hard it is for elected governments now to undertake even the most necessary reforms if those challenge major business interests or impose any significant cost or inconvenience on voters.” The distinction of Mr. Mills’s article is that it is the first time we can recall Churchill’s famous remark being quoted in correct context, including the qualifier, “it has been said.” In other words, Churchill was quoting someone else.

**British Tanks**


“I read many incidental remarks on the inferiority of British vs. German tanks when preparing my book on Montgomery,” Prof. Capet writes. “Few books have been written on the subject (compare the countless books on the RAF). The relevance for us is that Churchill himself must have been aware of the ‘inferiority complex’ regarding British armoured units. One of his constant themes before the Desert Army in July 1942 was the Sherman tanks promised by Roosevelt, though he exaggerated the numbers to boost morale.” Coombs’s book covers the reasons behind British tank problems early in the war.

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“This tank, the A.22, was ordered off the drawing board, and large numbers went into production very quickly. As might be expected, it had many defects and teething troubles, and when these became apparent the tank was appropriately rechristened the ‘Churchill.’ These defects have now been largely overcome.”

—WSC, 2 JULY 1942

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**Nuremberg? Forget It.**

Rhonda Fink-Whitman Mourns the Decline of Old Excellence

PHILADELPHIA, NOVEMBER 24TH—When Rhonda Fink-Whitman decided to test college students’ knowledge of the Holocaust at four local campuses, she discovered some amazing facts: Adolf Hitler was the leader of Amsterdam. Josef Mengele was an author. John F. Kennedy led the Allies during World War II, assisted by American Army General Winston Churchill.

Hardly any had heard of the Holocaust. When her questions turned to the “Kristallnacht” (Night of Broken Glass), the Nuremberg Trials or the meaning of the phrase “Final Solution,” forget it. “We are failing our children,” said Fink-Whitman, a longtime Philadelphia radio personality. “That really upsets me, as the daughter of a survivor, as the mother of college kids.”

Five states—New Jersey, New York, California, Florida, and Illinois—mandate Holocaust instruction in schools. Only two of two dozen students in the video answered the questions correctly, and they grew up in New Jersey and New York.

Few students could define “genocide,” or say whether it still occurs in the world today, apparently having missed the news on Bosnia, Rwanda, and Darfur. The name Eisenhower was a mystery. Students didn’t know why U.S. troops invaded Normandy, much less where it is. “It’s over near England and Germany and all that jazz,” a Temple student offered.

Fink-Whitman said she didn’t mean to embarrass the students, none of whom was named. All were bright, personable, and engaged—and chagrined by their historical illiteracy. Their answers reflect an absence of teaching, and the responsibility for that rests with educators and lawmakers, she said.

This is one more piece of evidence in favor of The Churchill Centre’s education programs, carried on for more than twenty years. “Institutes for teachers, especially high school teachers, have a multiplier effect,” says FH senior editor Professor Warren Kimball. “I’ve done them and believe they are the way to reach students.” The Churchill Centre has hosted three summer institutes where high school teachers expressed gratitude for being briefed on what to teach about World War II and Churchill’s role—subjects the average teacher has to cover in a week.

The Centre has also hosted outstanding student seminars—up to twenty undergraduates selected by involved, committed faculties. They read and reported on *My Early Life* and *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples*. The observations of some were new even to veteran Churchill scholars.
**INCOME DISPARITY THEN AND NOW**

Q Being interested in the current debate over the growing divide between rich and poor, I was startled to read a remarkably apophasis speech by Churchill from 1909. He was speaking about the House of Lords veto, but the text differs between the official biography, Martin Gilbert’s *Churchill: A Life*, and the *Complete Speeches* edited by Robert Rhodes James. Why?

—JAMES MACK, FAIRFIELD, OHIO

A This was Churchill’s Budget Speech in Leicester, 4 September 1909, first published in volume form in *Liberalism and the Social Problem* (1909), dated the 5th. From Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life* (1991): “He also spoke of the dangers of class warfare should the Budget proposals, and all they stood for, be rejected. ‘If we carry on in the old happy-go-lucky way, the richer classes ever growing in wealth and in number, the very poor remaining plunged or plunging ever deeper into helpless, hopeless misery,’ he warned, ‘then I think there is nothing before us but the savage strife between class and class, and an increasing disorganisation, with the increasing waste of human strength and human virtue.’ So angry was the King at these words, that his Private Secretary wrote to *The Times* in protest, an act without apparent precedent.”

In *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. 2 (1967), Randolph Churchill used brackets, which Gilbert deleted, and deleted two dashes: “If we [carry] on in the old happy go lucky way....”

The word Randolph replaced with “[carry]” was “stand,” which appears in the speech in both *Liberalism and the Social Problem* and *The People’s Rights* (1910). In the former it is footnoted “From *The Times*, by permission”). The *Liberalism* text was edited, probably by both Churchill and *The Times*. It is also much less fun than in *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches 1897-1963* (1974), which includes all the interruptions—from “hear, hear” to “it’s a disgrace for you to be standing on the platform”? (As Churchill told the ghost of his father in his 1947 fantasy, *The Dream*, politics had become a lot more mealy-mouthed by then.)

Your paragraph reads as follows in the *Complete Speeches*. Brackets indicate the text in *Liberalism and the Social Problem*:

“The two roads are open. We stand [are] at the crossways. If we carry on in the old happy-go-lucky way —[comma] the richer classes ever growing in wealth and in number, and the very poor remaining plunged or plunging ever deeper in helpless, hopeless misery —[comma] then I think there is nothing before us but savage strife between class and class, and with the [an] increasing disorganisation, with increasing waste of human strength and human virtue, nothing [in fact], but that dual degeneration which comes from the simultaneous waste of extreme wealth and extreme want.”

Setting aside the textual variations, isn’t this a potent speech? Some would say it has leftist or liberal implications, and they would be right. In 1909 young Winston was a crusading Liberal. His remarks added to his reputation as a “traitor to his class.” In the *Complete Speeches*, Robert Rhodes James wrote: “This speech deeply shocked many of Churchill’s former friends and provoked a letter of protest to *The Times* from the King’s private secretary...Churchill was also rebuked by the Prime Minister”—WSC’s fellow Liberal, H.H. Asquith.

**Riddles Mysteries Enigmas**

**“POSH”**

Q Manchester’s *The Last Lion* (Prologue, vol. 1) alleges that the term *POSH* is derived from “Port Out, Starboard Home,” the preferred side of steamships for Britons traveling to and from India, and was sometimes even stamped on their tickets. But other explanations, such as that on Snopes.com, contend otherwise. How reliable is William Manchester, in general?

—MICHAEL BEVEL, VIA EMAIL

A Snopes.com says the word might first have meant “cash,” but “Port Out, Starboard Home” didn’t surface until 1935, two decades after it appeared as a synonym for “luxurious” or “swank”—nothing about stamping *POSH* on tickets.

You are right to take Manchester with a grain of salt. I noted so many errors of fact in my review of volume 1 that he asked me to vet volume 2. I found 600 nits to pick and am fairly sure he didn’t consider them all. The gaffes ranged from his thinking Lullen-don was a village (it was WSC’s first country home) to misinterpreting the meaning of the key East Fulham by-election in the 1930s. Manchester was a great stylist, and few had a better way with words. His prologues are wonderful reads. The best place to go for facts is Martin Gilbert’s official biography, or his one-volume work, *Churchill: A Life*. RML
The 75th anniversary of Munich last autumn was marked by analogies. During the uproar over Syria’s chemical weapons, the American Secretary of State declared, “This is our Munich moment.” Later his opponents called easing sanctions on Iran “another Munich.” Both comparisons were inapt, except as examples of that lack of resolve which is part of human nature. Germany in 1938 was at once a greater threat, and less suicidal, than today’s villains. Iranian mullahs, by contrast, declare martyrdom a path to glory. At least for their co-religionists. And now we have Ukraine, on which more analogies will be drawn about when and when not to stand firm.

That the Nazis were not suicidal is I think significant. In the autumn of 1938, high-ranking Germans had a credible plan to depose Hitler if the Anglo-French stood firm at Munich. A defeat for Hitler was not inconceivable. The French army was partly mobilized, the Royal Navy fully mobilized. Munich’s by-products were a demoralized France and an unassailable Hitler.

Churchill was certain that 1938 was the time to resist, and said so in his war memoirs. Yet we are regularly told that the Munich agreement was necessary and wise, that it gave Britain more time to arm. We are less rarely reminded that it also gave Germany more time to arm—and to neutralize a potential enemy in the Soviet Union, while reaping a military bonanza in Czechoslovakia.

Thanks to Michael McMenamin for kind assistance in research.
Obviously, goes the refrain, Britain and France could not have defended landlocked Czechoslovakia. There was more to its defense than that, as Churchill wrote: “It surely did not take much thought…that the British Navy and the French Army could not be deployed on the Bohemian mountain front.”

If fighting or resisting Adolf Hitler in 1938 was so ludicrous a concept, what was there about fighting him in 1939-40 that made it so preferable? Was it the eradication of Poland in three weeks, the Low Countries in sixteen days, France in six weeks?

Churchill, who had only the scholarship of 1948—testimony at Nuremberg, recovered Nazi documents, private contacts—argued that Munich was the best opportunity to stop Hitler. Was he wrong? How has his theory stood the test of time and modern scholarship?

The answer is: pretty well—as this issue demonstrates. Reading it may convince you that Prime Minister Chamberlain “missed the bus” at Munich. Remember, though, that contrary arguments exist, and qualified counter-arguments are always welcome in these pages.

Williamson Murray begins by comparing the balance of military forces and political circumstances between 1938 and 1939. Some of his revelations are new and startling; some are common sense. Next, Michael McMenamin takes up the plot against Hitler—which, he says, was stopped cold by Hitler’s Munich triumph. We also provide Churchill’s 1948 arguments.

This is no attempt to pillory Neville Chamberlain, an easy target for generations of second-guessers. Without his rearmament programs and support of his successor, Churchill could not have successfully fought the Battle of Britain. Chamberlain was wrong about Hitler, but he had as Churchill said the “benevolent instincts of the human heart…even at great peril, and certainly to the utter disdain of popularity or clamour,” striving “to the utmost of his capacity and authority, which were powerful, to save the world from the awful, devastating struggle.”

An aspect of Munich touched on by Professor Murray was voiced during the planning of this issue by one of Finest Hour’s editors: “Whatever the relative strengths between UK/France and Nazi Germany in 1938, World War I was so recent in the national memories that public opinion (and Parliament) would never have been in favour of any pre-emptive ultimatum or strike at Hitler. It took two more Nazi outrages—the absorption of Czechoslovakia and the attack on Poland—to persuade everyone that enough was enough.”

This insightful observation has been made before. But again, we rarely hear the counterpoint: that the Germans too had had a bellyful of war and its disastrous aftermath. Rapturous crowds, believing he brought peace, greeted Chamberlain in Bad Godesberg on September 22nd. Berliners watching as Hitler reviewed a motorized column five days later were sparse and sullen, in the words of an eye-witness, William Shirer: “the most striking demonstration against war I’ve ever seen.” Hitler turned away in disgust, remarking to Goebbels, “I can’t lead a war with such people.”

The British popular will certainly registered with Chamberlain, and his predecessor. It was Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin who in 1936 had restrained the French after Hitler had occupied the Rhineland. When French Foreign Minister Pierre Flandin appealed for Britain to mobilize, Baldwin replied that he knew the British people, and they wanted peace. Flandin was convinced that France would not act without Britain, and that Britain would do nothing.

Churchill snorted at Baldwin’s interpretation of his duty. The responsibility of a leader is to lead, he said, and the leader’s primary concern is the safety of the nation—whatever the consequences:

I would endure with patience the roar of exultation that would go up when I was proved wrong, because it would lift a load off my heart and off the hearts of many Members. What does it matter who gets exposed or discomfited? If the country is safe, who cares for individual politicians, in or out of office?

Churchill made that ringing declaration in 1936. Now it was 1938. Hitler had absorbed the Rhineland and Austria, and was after Czechoslovakia. Self-evidently, the British were by now less pacifist; many were outraged. Lord Halifax, so often portrayed as an abject appeaser, led a “cabinet revolt,” saying Hitler could never be trusted, telegraphing Chamberlain: “Great mass of public opinion seems to be hardening in sense of feeling that we have gone to the limit of concession.” Churchill’s reply to the notion that Britons would never fight was given in an interview three months after Munich:

I am convinced that with adequate leadership, democracy can be a more efficient form of government than Fascism. In this country at any rate the people can readily be convinced that it is necessary to make sacrifices, and they will willingly undertake them if the situation is put clearly and fairly before them. No one can doubt that it was within >>
Churchill’s interviewer queried: “A bellicose mood?”
No, said Churchill: “A mood of ‘Thus far, and no farther.’
It is only by the spirit of resistance that man has learnt to
stand upright and instead of walking on all fours to
assume an erect posture. War is horrible, but slavery is
worse, and you may be sure that the British people would
rather go down fighting than live in servitude.”

By derivation Churchill would also say, as indeed his
whole life proved, that if a leader cannot carry the
people, then he goes: “…who cares for individual politi-
cians, in or out of office?”

Thanks to Messrs. Murray and McMenamin, we now
know more about Munich than we did. There
were choices. True, we were not there in 1938. We don’t know
the mood of the people, or the politicians. We never—
indeed even Churchill never—met the formidable Führer
face to face. We will never know the outcome as
Chamberlain described it, of “a quarrel in a far-away
country between a people of whom we know nothing.”

But we do know what happened in September 1939,
and in May–June 1940. And we are obliged to consider
Churchill’s opinion—which was, characteristically, far
from baseless.

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8. For a close account of the shift in British opinion see
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9. Ibid.
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In the Wake of Munich


COMPiled by the Editors

What to Do?, 5 October

LONDON—A meeting at Brendan Bracken’s house to decide what we are going to do. Are we to vote against the government or are we to abstain? We agree that the effect of our action would depend upon its joint character. It would be a pity if some of us voted against, and some abstained. It would be far more effective (since there is little hope of many voting against), if we all abstained. Winston says he refuses to abstain, since that would mean that he half agreed with Government policy. We decide that we must all do what we think best. [Thirty abstained, including WSC.]

—Harold Nicolson, MP (Diary)

Winston Not, 5 October

LONDON—The reconstruction of the Government is urgent. I do not believe that there is any basis of a working agreement between Winston and ourselves. But as to Anthony [Eden], I would get him back if and when you can.

—Samuel Hoare, Home Secretary

Weaker Brethren, 9 October

LONDON—I had to fight all the time against the defection of weaker brethren and Winston was carrying on a regular campaign against me…. I tried occasionally to take an antidote to the poison gas by reading a few of the countless letters and telegrams which continued to pour in expressing in most moving accents the writers’ heartfelt relief and gratitude. All the world seemed to be full of my praises except the House of Commons....

—Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister

Ought to Be interned, 11 October

NEW DELHI—Why, when there is a crisis, does Mr. Winston Churchill go to 10 Downing Street? Is he invited? I have got the greatest possible admiration for Mr. Churchill’s Parliamentary powers, and his artistic powers, but I have always felt that in a crisis he is one of the first people who ought to be interned.

—Lord Zetland, Secretary of State for India

Beautiful Speech, 23 October

NEW DELHI—What a beautiful speech that was of Winston’s….Lady Astor’s interpellations singularly inept! It must surely be true that those countries will, one after another, be drawn into this vast system of power politics…. [Many] dread the power of Nazi Germany and of our becoming dependent upon their good will and pleasure. I can “arise again and take our stand for freedom as in the olden time.” Grand words…coming as they do from Winston—I never shall understand why we can’t have him in the Government.

—P.F. Grigg, Chairman, Inland Revenue

The Last Seven Years, 26 October

TIDWORTH, WILTS.—The Government are blaming their failure to rearm in public on the Labour Party and in private on Lord Baldwin….Neither are blameless. Baldwin more probably more culpable than any other individual BUT the big 4 [Chamberlain, Hoare, Halifax, Simon] have all held high office in British Cabinet for at least a year longer than Hitler has been Chancellor. Three of them date back to ’31 and Halifax to ’32….From every point of view I’m sure it is advisable to shift criticism from the events of September to those of the last 7 years.

—Randolph Churchill, Army Officer

Idiocy and Stupidity, 6 November

WEIMAR—Mr. Churchill has declared openly that in his opinion the present regime in Germany should be abolished in cooperation with internal German forces who would put themselves gratefully at his disposal for the purpose. If Mr. Churchill had less to do with emigres, that is to say exiled foreign paid traitors, and more to do with Germans, then he would see the whole idiocy and stupidity of what he says. I can only assure this gentleman that there is in Germany no such power as could set itself against the present regime.

—Adolf Hitler, Chancellor and Führer

Churchill replied: “I am surprised that the head of a great State should set himself to attack British Members of Parliament, who hold no official position, and who are not even the leaders of parties…. Since he has been good enough to give me his advice I venture to return the compliment. Herr Hitler also showed himself unduly sensitive about suggestions that there may be other opinions in Germany besides his own. It would be indeed astonishing if among eighty millions of people so varying in origin, creed, interest and condition, there should be only one pattern of thought. It would not be natural. It is incredible. That he has the power, and alas the will, to suppress all inconvenient opinions is no doubt true. It would be much wiser to relax a little, and not try to frighten people out of their wits for expressing honest doubts and divergences.

Warmongers, 13 November

LONDON—There is a deliberate German campaign to represent Anthony Eden, Winston, etc as warmongers so as to debar their return to power, as it is felt in Germany that they are the only people who understand the danger and would be able to rouse this country to take appropriate action.

—Oliver Harvey, Diplomat
Munich and Its Alternative: The Case for Resistance

WILLIAMSON MURRAY

“You have only to look at the map...to see that nothing that France or we could do could possibly save Czechoslovakia from being overrun by the Germans, if they wanted to do it. I have therefore abandoned any idea of giving guarantees to Czechoslovakia, or to the French in connection with her obligations to that country.”

—Neville Chamberlain to his sister, 20 March 1938

“How erroneous Mr. Chamberlain’s private and earnest reasoning appears when we cast our minds forward to the guarantee he was to give to Poland within a year, after all the strategic value of Czechoslovakia had been cast away, and Hitler’s power and prestige had almost doubled!”


“In consequence of Wehrmacht demands and unlimited construction on the Westwall, so tense a situation in the economic sector occurred that the continuation of the tension past October 10 would have made a catastrophe inevitable.”

—Reich Defense Committee, October 1938

The theory that Neville Chamberlain saved Britain from a military and strategic defeat by his surrender to Adolf Hitler’s demands at Munich has been around for decades, and was cited by a professor at the last Churchill conference. In terms of the strategic and military situation in 1938, this theory could not be more incorrect.

Like most people, too many historians possess linear minds, and seem to believe that were one historical event changed, everything else would remain the same. Thus many defenders of the Munich surrender argue that, had war broken out in autumn 1938, the Germans would have conquered the Czechs just as quickly as they did the Poles the following year. Then, in spring 1939, they would have destroyed the French as quickly as in 1940, turning on a defenseless Britain, which

Dr. Murray is professor emeritus at Ohio State University, adjunct professor at Marine Corps University, and author or editor of many books on military history, strategy and theory. His latest book, Moment of Battle, with James Lacey, covers twenty crucial battles in history. His next book, on the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War, will appear this summer.
would have had an insufficient number of Hurricanes and Spitfires to defend itself against the Luftwaffe.

What such reasoning misses are the enormous changes in the balance of military power and the overall strategic situation that actually occurred between autumn 1938 and when war actually broke out in September 1939. At the time of Munich, the Germans were extraordinarily weaker than they would be a year later. Here then is a modest lesson for scholars and others who are contemptuous of military and strategic history, but happy to comment on it when the occasion suits them.

To judge the question properly, we must consider the preparedness of the three German military services for a major war in 1938; the overall economic and strategic situation at the time of Munich; and the results of Western policies in the months following Munich. None of this will suggest that the Western Powers in 1938 confronted a desperate strategic situation leading inexorably to defeat. What really matters is the actual context within which the military power of the West would have confronted war and Nazi Germany in 1938.1

**German Vulnerabilities**

The German army in late summer 1938 was just completing the first stages of its rearmament programs. It possessed only three armored divisions, all of which were equipped with light tanks, obsolete even by standards of the time. One year later, it would possess six panzer divisions, which it would buttress with the first runs of Mark III and IV medium tanks.

The Germans would find the Czech tanks they seized in March 1939 quite useful; three of the ten panzer divisions that invaded France in May 1940, including Rommel’s famous Seventh Panzer Division, would be equipped with Czech tanks. In May 1940, those ten panzer divisions would just manage to break through the French defenses in the Ardennes. It is hard to see how 1938’s three divisions of light tanks could have achieved the smashing victories Hitler wanted in either autumn 1938 or spring 1939.

While in a strategic sense the Czech position seemed hopeless, tactically their country was far more defensible than Poland would prove the following year, surrounded as Czechoslovakia was by major mountain chains.

Moreover, Czech equipment was much more up-to-date than that of the Poles, while the German army was far smaller and less robust than it would be the following year. In 1938, the Germans had barely enough divisions to handle a major campaign against Czechoslovakia. Only a handful of divisions were available to defend against any French incursion—there would undoubtedly have been few of those—and if the Poles intervened they would have tied up von Rundstedt’s army in Silesia.2

Hitler’s seizure of the rump of Czechoslovakia in March 1939 made for dramatic changes in the situation over the following year. Captured Czech armaments allowed the Wehrmacht to equip no fewer than four of its infantry divisions, as well as all of the Waffen SS divisions that would invade France in 1940. In addition, the Germans would sell a substantial portion of the arms dumps they seized to the Balkan countries for the hard currency their economy desperately needed. Czech defense industries such as the Skoda Works, and Czech stockpiles of raw materials and foreign exchange, would significantly aid the Germans in their continued armament efforts. Ironically, the Skoda Works would remain the last major industrial concern still producing armaments for the Wehrmacht in 1945.3

If the German army was unprepared for war in 1938, the other two services were in even worse condition. That summer, the Luftwaffe’s combat squadrons were evolving a new generation of aircraft—the stress-winged monoplanes that would dominate World War II. But its operationally-ready rates were barely over 50 percent, while its pilots were still largely untrained. The result was 1937-38’s accident rate, horrendous even by the standards of the time. After the crisis was over, the Luftwaffe’s chief of supply noted that the consequence of these circumstances was “a) a constant, and for first line aircraft, a complete lack of reserves both as accident replacements and for mobilization; b) a weakening of the aircraft inventory in the training schools in favor of regular units; and c) a lack of necessary reserve engines, supplies for the timely equipment of airfields, supply services, and depots both for peacetime needs as well as for mobilization.”4

Strategically, the Germans were also unprepared to launch major bombing attacks against the United Kingdom. One member of the air staff of Second Air Force noted that his service only possessed the ability to inflict pinpricks on the British.5 Based in Germany, far from the English Channel, and possessing only obsolete twin-engine bombers, the Luftwaffe was in no position to match the efforts it made in summer 1940 during the Battle of Britain—and it is well to remember how dismally those efforts failed.

The German navy was worse off than the Luftwaffe. No major fleet units, on which Hitler was lavishing so many resources, were ready for deployment in 1938; the only combat-ready units were three pocket battleships, in fact nothing more than glorified heavy cruisers. As for submarines, the navy possessed only a handful, none of which were fully combat-ready. They could have made only a few desperate forays against British trade, >>
which would not have had serious impact on the overall strategic situation. The German navy could not even execute an invasion of Norway, which succeeded only by the barest margins in April 1940, and at a cost of virtually the entire German fleet.

As dubious as Germany’s military situation in 1938 was the Reich’s overheated economy, a result of the massive rearmament Hitler had launched when he took power in 1933. This in turn posed serious difficulties in accessing raw materials crucial to a major armaments program. One does not wage a major war without access to raw materials or at least significant stockpiles; yet this is what Hitler threatened to do at Munich, much to the consternation of his generals (see following article).

The only raw material Germany had in abundance was coal. It did have some deposits of iron ore, most of it with a low percentage of iron content. Imported high-grade French and Swedish ore was essential to the functioning of a steel industry on which the war effort would depend. But war with the West would cut off the French supply, while Swedish ore would be problematic unless the Germans could seize Norway, which they were in no position to do in 1938.

Every other major raw material, including oil, rubber, manganese and aluminum, was either in short supply or non-existent on German territory. In peacetime Germany bought those materials with its limited hard currency; thus, German industry was unable to supply 59 percent of the Wehrmacht’s orders in the period before the war.

In 1939–40 the Germans would receive considerable help from the booty they seized in Czechoslovakia, as well as supplies received from the Soviet Union. In 1938 those stockpiles were not at their disposal. Russian aid only began to accelerate after the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact in August 1939.

The Anschluss with Austria in March 1938 brought a mild improvement in the German economic picture, but Hitler’s massive war preparations—mobilization against the Czechs, and the Westwall to protect the Franco-German frontier—created what was close to an economic crisis. By October 1938 the lack of foreign exchange had forced many rearmament industries to begin using emergency stockpiles. Petroleum stocks were almost exhausted when the Rumanians indicated at the end of September that they were about to shut off exports to the Reich. In early October the Reich Defense Committee reported that “in consequence of Wehrmacht demands and unlimited construction on the Westwall, so tense a situation in the economic sector occurred (coal, supplies for industries, harvest of potatoes and turnips, food supplies) that the continuation of the tension past October 10 would have made a catastrophe inevitable.”

Armament decisions by Hitler and his advisers underline the seriousness of Germany’s economic situation. In January 1939 Hitler announced a great export drive, but his speech was really a smokescreen to cover his massive cuts in the allocation of raw materials to the armed services. The Führer cut Wehrmacht steel allocations by 30
percent, copper by 20 percent, aluminum by 47 percent, rubber by 14 percent, and cement by 25-45 percent.\(^7\)

Not only was the 1938 German economy unprepared to bear the burdens of a major conflict, but war with the West would inevitably entail a British naval blockade that would halt the great majority of German imports. In 1939, the Germans would find the Soviets willing to help them avoid the full impact of a British blockade. But there was little chance of Russian assistance in 1938.

Would the German economy have collapsed under the pressures of war in 1938? Undoubtedly not, but it certainly could not have supported a major war. Indeed these prevailing economic difficulties convinced Hitler to occupy the remainder of Czechoslovakia six months after the signing of the Munich Agreement, finally awakening the British and French, although not necessarily their leaders, to the fact that Nazi Germany represented an unavoidable danger.

The Anglo-French

If Germany was not ready for war in 1938, neither were the Western Powers. Nonetheless, the Allies would be in an even more dangerous situation by 1939. At the time of Munich, their navies were unchallenged. In terms of air power, the French were considerably behind the Germans,\(^8\) while the RAF was beginning serial production of both Hurricanes and Spitfires. Although the British had not yet built up their defensive forces to provide the solid shield they would possess in 1940, it did not matter, because the Luftwaffe as yet lacked the means to launch effective strikes against the British Isles.

In terms of preparedness and doctrine, the French Army remained firmly mired in the First World War. Again, that was less of a problem in 1938, when modern German armored forces were so few in number, incapable of striking a deep and effective blow. German military leaders were well aware of their weakness. A memorandum by one senior naval officer warned: “A war against England and France means, militarily speaking, a lost war for Germany with all its consequences.” The chief of the German General Staff, General Ludwig Beck, was equally forthright in his warnings.

Two factors contributed mightily to the surrender at Munich. First, the terrible impact of the First World War’s losses weighed heavily on the British and French people—so much so that their leaders simply couldn’t believe Hitler would actually consider war as a realistic option. Second, a series of strategic appreciations which the French and British military ground out in large numbers during spring and summer 1938 uniformly bemoaned how desperate was the strategic situation. The British chiefs of staff, I suspect, painted a gloomier picture than they need have, hoping to push the government to greater defense allocations. >>

“NOT SINCE THE LOSS OF THE AMERICAN COLONIES...”

Winston S. Churchill to Paul Reynaud
French Minister of Finance, later Prime Minister
(Churchill papers: 2/332)
Published by Sir Martin Gilbert in 1982, this poignant letter reveals WSC’s depth of despair.

10 October 1938

I feel deeply concerned about the position of France, and about our own course. I cannot see what foreign policy is now open to the French Republic. No minor State will risk its future upon the guarantee of France. I am indulging in no pretensions upon our own account. You have been infected by our weakness, without being fortified by our strength. The politicians have broken the spirit of both countries successively. In the end England was ready to be better than her word. But it was too late. The magnitude of the disaster leaves me groping in the dark. Not since the loss of the American Colonies has England suffered so deep an injury. France is back to the morrow of 1870. What are we to do? I cannot tell what are the forces now governing French action. Flandin is surely only typical of very large interests and moods which are at work beneath the surface of French politics.

The question now presenting itself is: Can we make head against the Nazi domination, or ought we severally to make the best terms possible with it—while trying to rearm? Or is a common effort still possible?

For thirty years I have consistently worked with France. I make no defence of my own country; but I do not know on what to rest to-day.

Please show this letter to Monsieur Mandel: but keep it otherwise to yourself.
Munich and Its Alternative...

These dark military forecasts certainly encouraged the policy of appeasement, though on several occasions that arch-appeaser, Lord Halifax, told his colleagues that if it came to war, the Allies would probably win. Yet, in their almost endless discussions of the strategic situation, Chamberlain’s Cabinet left out perhaps the most important question of all: what would the strategic situation look like if the British and French handed over Czechoslovakia, and then had to fight the Germans a year later? Oliver Stanley, President of the Board of Trade, actually raised that question, but so late that the chiefs of staff never completed a study of the matter, and it was never discussed in Cabinet.

Post-Munich Failures

What happened after Munich underlines the weaknesses in Allied understanding of how dangerous a situation they now confronted. Politically, Chamberlain found himself in a conundrum. Through the summer of 1938, he and his supporters had cited British military unpreparedness to persuade waverers among their supporters, who were finding further appeasement repugnant. Having done so, the Prime Minister found himself under pressure to repair those deficiencies. Publicly, he announced that that was precisely what the government would do. But one of his chief advisers, Sir Horace Wilson, told him the government should make no changes in defense policies lest it provoke the Germans. Defense thus fell between two stools: promises of more, but little change at a crucial time.

Only minimal increases in defense spending occurred in the six months following Munich. Although the army had been capable of sending only two under-equipped divisions to the continent in September 1938, Chamberlain resisted all efforts to increase its budget until late February 1939, when it became clear that the French might not be willing to stand by the British should the Germans invade Holland as a precursor to launching attacks on the British Isles. The navy received funding for a few minesweepers and twenty escort vessels; the dredging of Dover and Rosyth harbors; an airfield at Scapa Flow; and permission to order armor plating from Czechoslovakia—hardly impressive increases in spending.

Supporters of Chamberlain’s action at Munich have argued that it allowed Britain to repair its weakness in fighter aircraft. In fact, the Cabinet increased the number of fighters on order only by extending the two-year contract to three years. There were no production increases of Hurricanes and Spitfires after Munich, even though British factories were turning out fighters at a faster rate than contracts called for. In effect, the six months after Munich represented a wasting period that did nothing to repair the deficiencies of Britain’s defenses. All the while, the Germans were urgently attempting to increase military production in spite of their economic difficulties.

It has often been claimed, as recently as at the 2013 Washington conference, that Churchill, confronted by the gloomy prognostications of the chiefs of staff, would have taken the same path at Munich as Chamberlain. But on 23 September 1938, the British chiefs of staff produced a far more optimistic paper than they had earlier. “Until such time as we can build up our fighting potential,” they wrote, “we cannot hope for quick results. Nevertheless, the latent resources of the Empire and the doubtful morale of our opponents under the stress of war give us confidence as to the ultimate outcome.”

Their newfound optimism probably reflected intelligence coming out of the Third Reich as to how badly prepared for war the Germans really were in 1938. Some of that intelligence had come from representatives of the German general staff itself—intelligence that Neville Chamberlain dismissed.
Had Churchill been prime minister, based on his habits when he did come to lead, there is no doubt that he would have paid closer attention. He would certainly have challenged the pusillanimous, worst-case staff studies produced by various military committees that made up the British high command. But in 1938 Churchill was neither prime minister nor a member of the Cabinet. He was still in the wilderness, a frustrated observer as his country lurched toward disaster. 

Endnotes
2. The Poles were on the fence. If the French and British came in, they hoped to attack the Germans. If the French and British stayed out, they hoped to grab some of Czechoslovakia (and did: see page 29), but this might have involved them in a war with the Soviets. The political-diplomatic situation was precarious in autumn 1938 and no one can predict how the dominoes might have fallen in the various scenarios.
5. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. The French, who had invested minimal sums in aircraft development, were two years behind the Germans and a year behind the British. Introducing revolutionary aircraft invariably leads to high accident rates and low commission rates. The Germans went through that process in 1937-38, the British in 1939, the French in 1940. Thus France had two outstanding fighter aircraft in May 1940 but their squadrons were 50-70 percent out of commission with lots of accidents. It all goes back to the disastrous industrial and defense policies of Leon Blum. See Murray, passim.
Regime Change, 1938: Did Chamberlain “Miss the Bus”?

MICHAEL McMENAMIN

“It was to the interest of the parties concerned after they were the prisoners of the Allies to dwell upon their efforts for peace. There can be no doubt however of the existence of the plot at this moment, and of serious measures taken to make it effective.”


“I myself still believe that Hitler missed the bus last September and that his generals won’t let him risk a major war now.”

—Neville Chamberlain to his sister, May 1939

“A mind sequestered in its own delusions is to reason invincible.” —Dante

In the early morning hours of 28 September 1938, a fifty-man *Stosstrupp*, a commando raiding party, assembled at Army headquarters of the Berlin Military District, home to General Erwin von Witzleben’s Third Army Corps. Commanded by Captain Friedrich Wilhelm Heinz of the Abwehr (Military Intelligence) the group comprised young, hand-picked anti-Nazis, half of whom were serving officers. The men were issued automatic weapons, ammunition and hand grenades furnished by Lieutenant Colonel Helmuth Groscurth of the Abwehr, who had been ordered to do so by Abwehr chief Admiral Wilhelm Canaris.¹

The *Stosstrupp* was to serve as an armed escort for General Witzleben when he went to the Chancellery to arrest Adolf Hitler the moment the Führer ordered an attack on Czechoslovakia. The plotters had every reason to believe this would occur later that day, since Hitler, meeting Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in Bad Godesberg on 22-23 September, had reneged on his pre-

Mr. McMenamin is co-author of *Becoming Winston Churchill: The Untold Story of Young Winston and His American Mentor*, and several Churchill novels; he also writes “Action This Day,” *FH*’s quarterly summary of Churchill’s activities one hundred twenty-five, one hundred, seventy-five and fifty years ago.

¹ Regime Change, 1938: Did Chamberlain “Miss the Bus”?
vicious agreement to accept a plebiscite in the Sudetenland, the German-speaking area of Czechoslovakia. Hitler now said the Czechs had until 2pm on the 28th to accept German occupation of the Sudetenland, with a plebiscite to be conducted later. Otherwise, Hitler vowed to “march into the Sudeten territory on October 1st with the German army.” Inasmuch as Hitler had promised the German General Staff that he would give them two days’ notice of his intent to invade, the Stosstrupp believed it would be swinging into action by mid-afternoon, after the 2pm deadline expired.

Hitler’s Chancellery was surprisingly vulnerable, with only thirty-nine SS guards working three shifts. At most, fifteen men were on duty at any given time. Witzleben and the other plotters planned to take Hitler to a secure location where he would await trial for trying to take Germany into an unwanted war that senior military leaders, including Luftwaffe chief Herman Goering, opposed.

Heinz and Lieutenant Colonel Hans Oster, the conspiracy’s mastermind and Abwehr second-in-command, had a different fate in mind for the dictator. Convinced that Hitler alive posed a continuing danger, they planned to have the raiding party open fire even if his SS guards offered no resistance, killing Hitler in the mêlée.

Simultaneously, the Berlin police would arrest other top Nazis, while General Graf Walter von Brockdorf, commander of the 23rd Infantry Division in nearby Potsdam, would neutralize the SS in Berlin.

Only one man could prevent Hitler’s assassination and the forcible overthrow of his regime. That man was Neville Chamberlain.

A Serious Conspiracy

“There can be no doubt,” Churchill wrote in 1948, “of the existence of a plot” among the highest levels of the German army and Berlin police to depose Hitler if he ordered the invasion of Czechoslovakia: “…serious measures [had been] taken to make it effective.”

The goal was to supplant the Nazi regime with a provisional government that Reichbank President Hjalmar Schacht had agreed to lead. Oster’s principal co-conspirator and chief recruiter was his close friend Hans Gisevius, then with the Interior Ministry and later in the Abwehr. Both would be involved in the unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Hitler in 1944.

We now know that the 1938 plot reached very high levels. In addition to those already named, conspirators included Chief of the German General Staff Franz Halder; former Chief Ludwig Beck; Wehrmacht Commander-in-Chief General Walther von Brauchitsch; Berlin Police President and Vice-President Graf Wolf von Helldorf and Graf Fritz von der Schulenburg; Chief of Berlin Criminal Police Arthur Nebe; the Foreign Ministry’s State Secretary Ernst von Weizsäcker and Chief of Ministerial Office Erich Kordt; Erich’s brother Theo, of the German Embassy in London; Hans von Dohnanyi of the Ministry of Justice; Prussian aristocrat Ewald von Kleist; and Hitler’s interpreter, Paul Otto Schmidt.

Missing the Bus

Repeatedly in 1938-39, Neville Chamberlain remarked that Hitler “missed the bus.” Two such occasions were September 1938, when Hitler “could have dealt France and ourselves a terrible, perhaps a mortal, blow”; and September 1939, when he had failed to attack the Anglo-French “before we had time to make good our deficiencies.” The phrase came back to haunt him. “Missed the bus, missed the bus!” his colleagues chanted, as he arrived in Parliament for the debate on Hitler’s conquest of Norway in May 1940.

What about the bus Chamberlain thought Hitler had missed in 1938? As noted in the foregoing article, Hitler was in no position then to deal the Anglo-French a mortal blow. The German opposition, and Churchill, believed there were alternatives to war or surrender, provided Britain and France stood firm. Historians, Churchill wrote, “should probe…this internal crisis in Berlin.” Should it “eventually be accepted as historical truth, it will be another example of the very small accidents upon which the fortunes of mankind turn.”

“Small accident” is too charitable a term. Today there is no historical doubt that the German resistance repeatedly warned the British of Hitler’s intention to invade Czechoslovakia in September 1938, and that, if he did, they would depose him—provided France honored her obligation to the Czechs and Britain stood by France.

In response, however, the Chamberlain government took every diplomatic step it could—often against the advice of Foreign Minister Lord Halifax—to undermine Hitler’s opposition. It is fair to say that Chamberlain, not Hitler, missed the bus in 1938: the opportunity to rid Germany of a lawless government whose economic and rearmament policies made its very survival dependent upon going to war.15 Churchill to the contrary, this was no accident. It was British policy, recognized as such at the highest levels during and after Munich.

Mr. Chamberlain, a rational man, had two reasons for failing to capitalize on the warnings of Hitler’s opposition. Both turned out to be tragically wrong.

First, the Prime Minister considered the German opposition traitorous, not to be taken seriously. In August 1938, Foreign Minister Lord Halifax reported to Chamberlain a meeting between Sir Robert Vansittart, >>
Permanent Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs and Ewald von Kleist, a conservative anti-Nazi, sent to London by Oster, Canaris and Beck. Kleist, Chamberlain wrote Halifax, “reminds me of the Jacobites at the Court of France in King William’s time and I think that we must discount a good deal of what he says.”

Kleist had told Vansittart that high-level Army officers were prepared to act, so long as the Anglo-French held fast. If they did, Kleist added, “there would be a new system of government [in Germany] within forty-eight hours.” Kleist said the same to Churchill, who at Kleist’s request wrote him a letter to show his fellow conspirators: “I am sure that the crossing of the frontier of Czecho-Slovakia by German armies or aviation in force will bring about a renewal of the world war.”

Kleist’s was not an isolated message. The British government had been receiving information of a coup against Hitler from multiple sources since July. As late as 7 September, Theo Kordt, at the German Embassy in London, delivered the same message to Halifax, expecting him to issue a public statement that Britain would support France. Halifax wished to do so, but Chamberlain stopped him. Chamberlain’s rationale was his personal plan—his second reason for shunning the Hitler opposition.

Chamberlain’s “Plan Z”

By the time Halifax met with Kordt, Chamberlain had already secretly conceived a strategy whereby he would save the day, bringing peace to Europe while keeping the Nazis in power. “Plan Z,” conceived solely by the Prime Minister, was the ultimate undoing of Hitler’s 1938 German opposition.

While Britain had no obligation to come to the defense of Czechoslovakia, France did. Plan Z—known only to a few intimates including Halifax—called for Chamberlain to announce, at the last minute before Hitler attacked Czechoslovakia, that he would fly to Germany to discuss the crisis. The announcement would be made without prior notice to the French.

The Czechs at that time were still naively negotiating with Konrad Henlein of the Sudeten Germans for more Sudeten autonomy, unaware that Hitler had told Henlein to insist upon terms no Czech government could possibly accept, giving Hitler a pretext to use force. The Czechs were taken by surprise when, on 14 September, Chamberlain duly announced he would fly to meet Hitler, who by now was demanding “the free right of self-determination” for Sudeten Germans.

The German conspirators were dismayed. How could they launch a coup d’état while Hitler was holding peace...
talks with Britain? Still they did not believe Chamberlain would yield to Hitler’s demands. “In all seriousness,” Gisevius wrote, “we imagined the chief danger for us lay in the possibility that not Chamberlain but Hitler might back down.” After learning from Hitler’s translator Paul Schmidt that Chamberlain had given in, Gisevius added, “we bowed our heads in despair. To all appearances it was all up with our revolt.”

Then the Führer gave the conspirators renewed hope. He wanted his little war. After Chamberlain had departed to consult his Cabinet and the French, Schmidt informed the plotters, Hitler said he would now escalate his demands and propose new, humiliating terms that, if rejected, would give him a pretext to invade. Afforded fresh life, the plotters resumed their activities.

Hitler was as good as his word. At Bad Godesberg on 22-23 September, when Chamberlain proudly announced that he had persuaded the French and Czechs to accept a Sudeten plebiscite, Hitler coolly said this was no longer acceptable. He then delivered the conditions Schmidt had forecast—immediate Czech withdrawal and German occupation of the Sudetenland on 26 September followed by a plebiscite later. The only concession Hitler would make to a shocked Chamberlain was to postpone occupation until 1 October, so long as the Czechs accepted his new demands by the 28th. The German conspirators were certain Chamberlain would never accept “such monstrous demands.” They were wrong. Again.

Bumps in the Road

Chamberlain, determined to cut a deal despite Hitler’s new terms, informed the Cabinet on 24 September, expecting to be supported. Channeling his inner Churchill, Halifax objected: “Herr Hitler has given us nothing [and is] dictating terms as if he had won a war without having to fight,” Halifax told the Cabinet.

“Can you trust a man who negotiates like he is dictating a Carthaginian peace to keep his promises he has made about the future?”

Chamberlain could, perhaps, but Halifax wouldn’t have it. The only “ultimate end,” he replied, was “the destruction of Nazism,” because as long as Hitler lasted, “peace would be uncertain.” Like Churchill, Halifax was willing to contemplate regime change instead of swallowing whatever the Führer chose to dish out. Aware of the many messages from the German resistance, he added that if Hitler were driven to war, “the result might be to help bring down the regime.” Appalled, Chamberlain passed Halifax a note: “Your complete change of view…is a horrible blow to me.”

Meanwhile, France and Czechoslovakia had rejected Hitler’s ultimatum. The Cabinet seemed more persuaded by Halifax than Chamberlain, so on the 26th the Prime Minister’s trusted adviser, Sir Horace Wilson, was sent to Germany with a letter conveying their rejections, warning that if France became involved in hostilities with Germany, Britain would support France. Wilson flew home the next day; in a speech that night, an enraged Hitler promised to invade Czechoslovakia if his Godesberg ultimatum was not accepted.

So encouraged, Heinz’s raiding party assembled in Berlin and was issued arms in the early morning hours of September 28th. Since on the 27th the British Cabinet had rejected Chamberlain’s renewed plea for a telegram urging the Czechs to accept, war seemed inevitable. But nothing happened. Why?

Despite increasing isolation within his Cabinet, the Prime Minister’s mind remained sequestered in its own delusions that Plan Z made sense; that “he had now established an influence” over Hitler; that they could negotiate in good faith because “he was sure” he had the Führer’s respect. Without consulting the Cabinet, he wrote to Hitler through British Ambassador Nevile Henderson, giving no indication of the Cabinet’s hardening attitude. Instead he proposed a five-power conference between Britain, Germany, Czechoslovakia, France and Italy, where, Chamberlain assured Hitler,
Regime Change, 1938....

Germany could “get all essentials without war and without delay.” He then cabled Lord Perth, his ambassador in Rome, directing Perth to seek the support of Benito Mussolini.30

When Mussolini urged Hitler to accept, the Führer himself was having second thoughts about invasion. Duff Cooper’s mobilization of the Royal Navy, announced late on the 27th, had shaken him. “I think,” he said to Goering, “the English fleet might shoot after all.”31 Chamberlain’s proposal was Hitler’s life-line. Acceding to Mussolini, Hitler told Henderson, “I have postponed mobilizing my troops for twenty-four hours.” A few minutes before his 2pm deadline on September 28th he sent invitations to the leaders of Britain, France and Italy (but not Czechoslovakia) to meet him the next day in Munich.32

The Fatal Step

Chamberlain’s invitation arrived at 3pm as he spoke on the floor of the House of Commons. He accepted on the spot, ignoring Hitler’s exclusion of the Czechs. Notwithstanding his Cabinet’s earlier refusal to pressure the Czechs, he was certain that the conference would agree to the key demand at Godesberg: Czech withdrawal and German occupation of the Sudetenland before any plebiscite. In Munich on 30 September, the four powers agreed to just that, then coerced the Czechs to go along. Hitler’s only concession was that, while the Czechs must leave at once, German occupation would commence on October 10th rather than the 1st.

Afterward, in the euphoria of what he was sure had kept Europe out of war, Chamberlain got Hitler to sign the crown jewel of Plan Z—a one-page, three-paragraph document stating the desire of Great Britain and Germany never to go to war with each other again. Back in Great Britain, Chamberlain held the sheet in the air and assured the British that it meant “peace for our time.”

In the event, as we now know, no plebiscite in the Sudeten was ever held. Six months later, Hitler and several other greedy countries occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia, left defenseless by the loss of its fortress line—a bonanza which would enable the formidable German onslaught in the West, including Czech tanks and war materiel, that swept to victory in 1940. (See Williamson Murray’s previous article.)

It was all over. In Parliament on 3 October, Duff Cooper announced his resignation as First Lord of the Admiralty. On the 5th, Churchill spoke: “Silent, mournful, abandoned, broken, Czechoslovakia recedes into the darkness,” and “terrible words have for the time being been pronounced against the western democracies: ‘Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting.’”

**“PEACE IN OUR TIME”:**
The document co-signed by Hitler and Neville Chamberlain as the Prime Minister left Munich. The three-paragraph “sheet of paper” declared that consultation was the settled Anglo-German policy in all future disputes and stated the intent of the two countries to consult in the method of Munich on any future questions.

![Image of the document](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hitler_Chamberlain_Peace_in_Our_Time_1938.png)

September 30, 1938

We, the German Führer and Chancellor and the British Prime Minister, have had a further meeting today and are agreed in recognising that the question of Anglo-German relations is of the first importance for the two countries and for Europe.

We regard the agreement signed last night and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement as symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again.

We are resolved that the method of consultation shall be the method adopted to deal with any other questions that may concern our two countries, and we are determined to continue our efforts to remove possible sources of difference and thus to contribute to assure the peace of Europe.

(s) Adolf Hitler
Neville Chamberlain
In Berlin on October 3rd Witzleben, Oster, Schacht and Gisevius gathered around the fireplace in the Witzleben’s Berlin mansion where, as Gisevius recalled, “we tossed our lovely plans and projects into the fire.”

The conspirators were bitter. Erich Kordt wrote after the war that swallowing Hitler’s terms “prevented the coup d’état in Berlin.” Gisevius in his memoirs was less kind: “Peace in our time? Let us put it a bit more realistically. Chamberlain saved Hitler.”

Post hoc sour grapes? Perhaps. But the highest levels of the British government knew at the time precisely what they had done at Munich. They had intentionally sabotaged a coup d’état in Germany, of which they had been forewarned, so that Plan Z could be fulfilled. As Ambassador Sir Nevile Henderson lamented to Halifax in an October 6th letter which foreshadowed Gisevius: “by keeping the peace, we have saved Hitler and his regime.”

Chamberlain had missed the bus—and now it was being driven by Hitler on a highway to hell.

Endnotes

4. Meehan, 150.
5. Parssinen, 133-34; Meehan, 150.
8. Schacht, 119-25; Meehan, 149-50; Parssinen, 98-100.
11. Chamberlain to a Conservative Party rally, 4 April 1940, in Self, 415.
17. Meehan, 141-42; Parssinen, 71-72, 76.
18. Meehan, 173; Parssinen, 76. Churchill’s letter was headed, “My dear sir,” to protect von Kleist’s identity. The letter was delivered to Kleist in London on 20 August; Churchill sent copies to Chamberlain and Halifax, along with notes of his meeting. Unfortunately, Kleist kept his copy in his desk and its discovery by the Gestapo following the failed 1944 assassination attempt resulted in his execution.
22. Gisevius, 322.
24. Ibid.
25. A. Roberts, 112-13; Parssinen, 140-41; Meehan, 173.
26. Gisevius, 323; Parssinen, 139.
27. A. Roberts, 115-17; Parssinen, 143-45.
30. Meehan, 178-79; Parssinen, 163.
31. Meehan, 178. Cooper and Churchill had unsuccessfully urged Chamberlain to move the Fleet to its war station at Scapa Flow four weeks earlier.
32. Meehan, 179; Parssinen, 163.
33. Gisevius, 326.
34. Parssinen, 219-20.

Further Reading

Churchill briefly discusses the 1938 conspiracy in The Gathering Storm (1948), based on his involvement and testimony at Nuremberg. He did not have the benefit of postwar memoirs by conspirators like Gisevius, Erich Kordt, Schacht and Schmidt, nor of later-released British Foreign Office documents. Two books telling the story in more detail from both the British and German sides are Patricia Meehan, The Unnecessary War, Whitehall and the German Resistance to Hitler (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1992); and Terry Parssinen, The Oster Conspiracy of 1938 (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), which are relied upon in this account. From the German side, see also Peter Hoffman, German Resistance to Hitler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); and Joachim Fest, Plotting Hitler’s Death: The Story of the German Resistance (New York: Metropolitan, 1996). Fest considered the 1938 conspiracy “probably the most promising of all the plots against Hitler.”
4 September: Franz Halder, von Beck’s successor, meets with Reichsbank President Schacht, who agrees to head a provisional government following a coup.

5 September: Halder meets with Gisevius to discuss police support of coup, calls Hitler a “madman” and “criminal,” wishes Hitler to meet with a “fatal accident.”

7 September: Theo Kordt at the German Embassy, London, informs Halifax that German army will depose Hitler if the Führer orders an invasion of Czechoslovakia.

12 September: Hitler demands “the right of self-determination” for Sudeten Germans, calls Czechoslovakia a “fraudulent state.”

13 September: Nazis foment violence and disruption in Czechoslovakia. Halder wants coup “in the brief breathing spell” before “the first exchange of shots.”

14 September: Chamberlain to George VI: Britain and Germany are “the two pillars of European peace and buttresses against communism.” The Prime Minister discloses his “Plan Z” to Cabinet. Hitler is “flabbergasted” by Chamberlain’s offer to fly to Germany.

15 September: Chamberlain flies to meet Hitler at Berchtesgaden.

16 September: French Premier Daladier meets with British Foreign Minister Lord Halifax in London.

18 September: Mussolini declares he supports Hitler.

20 September: Plotters finalize plans for raiding party to arrest Hitler. Oster and Heinz privately agree that Hitler must be killed in the confusion.

21 September: Czech President Beneš agrees to Sudetenland plebiscite and to cede majority German territory in exchange for an Anglo-French “guarantee.”

22-23 September: At Bad Godesberg, Hitler reneges on plebiscite pledge, demanding Czech withdrawal and occupation of Sudetenland.

23 September: Czechoslovakia mobilizes. British chiefs of staff express “confidence as to the ultimate outcome.”

24 September: Hitler’s Godesberg Memorandum demands Czechs accept Sudetenland plebiscite and to cede majority German territory in exchange for an Anglo-French “guarantee.”

22-23 September: At Bad Godesberg, Hitler reneges on plebiscite pledge, demanding Czech withdrawal and occupation of Sudetenland.

23 September: Czechoslovakia mobilizes. British chiefs of staff express “confidence as to the ultimate outcome."

24 September: Hitler’s Godesberg Memorandum demands Czechs accept Sudetenland ultimatum by 2pm on 28 September. Later he sets occupation date back to 1 October “out of respect” for Chamberlain.

25 September: To Chamberlain’s shock, Halifax tells the Cabinet: “Hitler has given us nothing…as if he had won a war without having to fight.”

26 September: German generals refused audience with the Führer. Horace Wilson conveys Chamberlain’s letter to Hitler stating that if Czechs reject terms and France is involved, Britain will support France.

27 September: Coup raiding party assembles at safe houses. Royal Navy ordered to mobilize. Hitler postpones German mobilization twenty-four hours, telling Goering, “the English fleet might shoot after all.”

1938

18 March: Soviet Union proposes conference with Britain and France on implementing the Franco-Soviet pact in event of German aggression.

20 March: Chamberlain: “I have abandoned any idea of giving guarantees to Czechoslovakia, or to the French.”

28 March: Hitler tells Sudeten Nazi Henlein to make “unacceptable demands” on the Czech government.

21 May: Czech army on alert. Britain and France warn Hitler, who is perceived to have backed down.

28 May: Hitler, furious at perceptions that he yielded, declares, “Czechoslovakia shall be wiped off the map.”

3 June: General von Beck writes Hitler opposing invasion of Czechoslovakia on military grounds.

15 June: German General Staff war game concludes Czech invasion will take three months while France is advancing deep into German territory.

18 June: Hitler says he won’t march unless convinced that France and England will not intervene.

16 July: Von Beck again writes Hitler, stating that an attack on the Czechs will involve war with Anglo-French.

18 July: Halifax tells Hitler’s adjutant that Britain will resist German aggression.

4 August: At secret meeting of generals, von Beck reads his 16 July memo to Hitler. Beck and Halder conclude “something must be done” to prevent disaster.

17 August: Ewald von Kleist goes to London. Von Beck tells Kleist: “Bring me certain proof that England will fight if Czechoslovakia is attacked and I will make an end of this regime.”

18 August: Kleist delivers his message to Vansittart who reports it to Halifax, and Halifax to Chamberlain.

19 August: Kleist delivers his message to Churchill, who writes for the record that a German invasion would result in “a renewal of the world war.”

20 August: Chamberlain compares von Kleist to “the Jacobites at the Court of France in King William’s time.”

21 August: Hitler forces von Beck’s resignation: “The only man I fear is Beck. That man would be capable of acting against me.”
28 September: Raiding party issued arms and ammunition. Chamberlain proposes conference by which Hitler will get “all essentials without war and without delay.”

29 September: Munich Accord—virtually identical to Godesberg Memorandum—signed by Hitler, Mussolini, Chamberlain and Daladier, excluding the Czechs.

30 September: Czechoslovakia capitulates. Returning to Britain, Chamberlain declares “peace for our time.”

2 October: Inspecting Czech fortifications, Hitler tells Goebbels, “we would have shed a lot of blood.”

3 October: Duff Cooper resigns as First Lord of the Admiralty. Oster, Schacht, Gisevius and Witzleben burn their conspiracy papers.

5 October: Beneš resigns as Czech President. In London, Churchill tells Parliament: “we have sustained a total and unmitigated defeat...”

6 October: British Ambassador to Germany Nevile Henderson writes Lord Halifax, “by keeping the peace, we have saved Hitler and his regime.”

10 October: German troops begin occupying Sudetenland. Czechoslovakia loses 70% of its iron, steel and electrical power and 3.5 million citizens.

18 October: Churchill broadcasts to America on his view of Munich.

1939

8 January: French generals tell Churchill they were “confident they could have broken through the weak, unfinished German line...by the fifteenth day.”

14 March: Slovakia secedes from Czechoslovakia to form an independent, pro-Nazi state. Ruthenia secedes but is occupied by Hungary.

15 March: Germany occupies remainder of Czechoslovakia, proclaims Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, which will supply 25% of German weaponry.
For some years it seemed that the question whether Britain and France were wise or foolish in the Munich episode would become a matter of long historical controversy. However, the revelations which have been made from German sources and particularly at the Nuremberg Trials, have rendered this unlikely. (218)

The Soviet Proffer
[In March 1938 the Russians] wished to discuss, if only in outline, ways and means of implementing the Franco-Soviet pact within the frame of League action in the event of a major threat to peace by Germany. This met with little warmth in Paris and London. The French Government was distracted by other preoccupations. There were serious strikes in the aircraft factories. Franco’s armies were driving deep into the territory of Communist Spain. Chamberlain was both sceptical and depressed. He profoundly disagreed with my interpretation of the dangers ahead and the means of combating them. I had been urging the prospects of a Franco-British-Russian alliance as the only hope of checking the Nazi onrush....the Prime Minister expressed his mood in a letter to his sister on March 20: “The plan of the ‘Grand Alliance,’ as Winston calls it, had occurred to me long before he mentioned it....You have only to look at the map to see that nothing that France or we could do could possibly save Czechoslovakia.”...Here was at any rate a decision. It was taken on wrong arguments.

In modern wars of great nations or alliances particular areas are not defended only by local exertions. The whole vast balance of the war-front is involved. This is still more true of policy before war begins and while it may still be averted. It surely did not take much thought from the “Chiefs of Staff and F.O. experts” to tell the Prime Minister that the British Navy and the French Army could not be deployed on the Bohemian mountain front to stand between the Czechoslovak Republic and Hitler’s invading army....How erroneous Mr. Chamberlain’s private and earnest reasoning appears when we cast our minds forward to the guarantee he was to give to Poland within a year, after all the strategic value of Czechoslovakia had been cast away, and Hitler’s power and prestige had almost doubled! (213-14)

Hitler’s Order
On June 18 [Hitler] issued a final directive for the attack on Czechoslovakia, in the course of which he sought to reassure his anxious generals....”I will decide to take action against Czechoslovakia only if I am firmly convinced, as in the case of [the Rhineland] and the entry into Austria that France will not march, and that therefore England will not intervene.” (226)

Allied Readiness
The Czechs had a million and a half men armed behind the strongest fortress line in Europe, and equipped by a highly organised and powerful industrial machine. The French Army was partly mobilised, and, albeit reluctantly, the French Ministers were prepared to honour their obligations to Czechoslovakia. Just before midnight on September 27 the warning telegram was sent out from the Admiralty ordering the mobilisation of the Fleet for the following day. (243)

The German Generals
There was intense, unceasing struggle between the Führer and his expert advisers. Beck was universally trusted and respected by the Army Staff, who were united not only in professional opinion but in resentment of civilian and party dictation. The September crisis seemed to provide all the circumstances which the German generals dreaded. Between thirty and forty Czech divisions were deploying upon Germany’s eastern frontiers, and the weight of the French Army, at odds of nearly eight to
one, began to lie heavy on the Western Wall. A hostile Russia might operate from Czech airfields, and Soviet armies might wend their way forward through Poland or Roumania. Finally, in the last stage the British Navy was said to be mobilising. As all this developed passions rose to fever-heat....

The generals were repeatedly planning revolts, and as often drew back at the last moment for one reason or another....There can be no doubt however of the existence of the plot at this moment, and of serious measures taken to make it effective. “By the beginning of September [Halder says] we had taken the necessary steps to immunize Germany from this madman...and issue a proclamation to the people that we had taken this action only because we were convinced they were being led to certain disaster.” (244)

German Military Analysis

Of other less violent but earnest efforts of the General Staff to restrain Hitler there can be no doubt. On September 26 a deputation, consisting of General von Hanneken, Ritter von Leeb, and Colonel Bodenschatz, called at the Chancellery of the Reich and requested to be received by Herr Hitler. They were sent away. At noon on the following day the principal generals held a meeting at the War Office. They agreed upon a memorial, which they left at the Chancellery.

This document was published in France in November 1938....Chapter I stresses the divergences between the political and military leadership of the Third Reich, and declares that the low morale of the German population renders it incapable of sustaining a European war....Chapter II describes the bad condition of the Reichswehr and...”the absence of discipline.” Chapter III enumerates the various deficiencies in German armaments, dwelling upon the defects in the Siegfried Line [and] in the Aix-la-Chapelle and Saarbruck areas.... Finally, emphasis is laid on the shortage of officers....The document presents the reasons why defeat must be accounted for. 

Nuremberg Testimony

We have now also Marshal von Keitel’s answer to the specific question put to him by the Czech representative at the Nuremberg trials.... “Would the Reich have attacked Czechoslovakia in 1938 if the Western Powers had stood by Prague?” Keitel answered: “Certainly not. We were not strong enough militarily. The object of Munich was to get Russia out of Europe, to gain time, and to complete the German armaments.” (250)

The Lessons of Munich

Those who are prone by temperament and character to seek sharp and clear-cut solutions of difficult and obscure problems, who are ready to fight whenever some challenge comes from a foreign Power, have not always been right. On the other hand, those whose inclination is to bow their heads, to seek patiently and faithfully for peaceful compromise, are not always wrong....How many wars have been averted by patience and persisting goodwill!! ....The Sermon on the Mount is the last word in Christian ethics. Everyone respects the Quakers. Still, it is not on these terms that Ministers assume their responsibilities of guiding States. Their duty is first so to deal with other nations as to avoid strife and war and to eschew aggression in all its forms, whether for nationalistic or ideological objects. But the safety of the State, the lives and freedom of their own fellow-citizens, to whom they owe their position, make it right and imperative in the last resort, or when a final and definite conviction has been reached, that the use of force should not be excluded....And if this be so it should be used under the conditions which are most favourable.

There is no merit in putting off a war for a year if, when it comes, it is a far worse war or one much harder to win. These are the tormenting dilemmas upon which mankind has throughout its history been so frequently impaled. Final judgment upon them can only be recorded by history in relation to the facts of the case as known to the parties at the time, and also as subsequently proved. There is however one helpful guide, namely, for a nation to keep its word and to act in accordance with its treaty obligations to allies. This guide is called honour.

It is baffling to reflect that what men call honour does not correspond always to Christian ethics. Honour is often influenced by that element of pride which plays so large a part in its inspiration. An exaggerated code of honour leading to the performance of utterly vain and unreasonable deeds could not be defended, however fine it might look. Here however the moment came when honour pointed the path of duty, and when also the right judgment of the facts at that time would have reinforced its dictates.

For the French Government to leave her faithful ally Czechoslovakia to her fate was a melancholy lapse from which flowed terrible consequences. Not only wise and fair policy, but chivalry, honour, and sympathy for a small threatened people made an overwhelming concentration. Great Britain, who would certainly have fought if bound by treaty obligations, was nevertheless now deeply involved, and it must be recorded with regret that the British Government not only acquiesced but encouraged the French Government in a fatal course. (251)
December 2011 marked the 70th anniversary of Churchill’s first speech to Congress, only three weeks after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Churchill had come to Washington to coordinate with President Roosevelt the now-combined war effort. At a joint session of Congress, December 26th, he received a rousing welcome, winning over even former critics with his roar of defiance at the enemy, driving them to their feet when he exclaimed, “What kind of a people do they think we are?”

The anniversary of this signal moment did not go unnoticed. John Boehner, Speaker of the House, observed that the Small House Rotunda near his office, containing a bust of the Hungarian patriot Lajos Kossuth, “had room for at least two more.” For months, the Speaker’s chief of staff Mike Sommers said, “we had a running conversation about whom we should place there. We
kept coming back to Churchill.”

Boehner, a lifetime Churchill admirer, has read “biography after biography,” Mr. Sommers continued. “Late in 2011 we started researching a resolution to authorize the placement of a Churchill bust in the Capitol, and realized we were on the cusp of the anniversary of Churchill’s historic address. We wrote the resolution and rushed it to the floor.”

House Resolution 497, approved unanimously, stated: “Churchill’s persistence, determination and resolve remain an inspiration to freedom-fighters all over the world,” adding that Britain “will forever be an important and irreplaceable ally to the United States.”

Since the Capitol “does not currently appropriately recognize the contributions of Sir Winston Churchill or that of the United Kingdom,” it continued, the Architect of the Capitol was directed to “place an appropriate statue or bust of Sir Winston Churchill in the U.S. Capitol at a location directed by the House Fine Arts Board in consultation with the Speaker.” Members of both parties spoke in support. >>
which furloughed many government employees weeks before the unveiling.

What type of bust should be placed in the Capitol? Where would it best be seen by hundreds of thousands per year? Although the Speaker’s office had considered commissioning one, we believed there was only one sculptor suitable: the late Oscar Nemon, Churchill’s friend, whose work had first attracted the keen eye of Clementine Churchill in the 1950s. We approached his daughter, Lady Young, about a new casting from one of his Churchill busts from life.

Alice Nemon-Stuart, the sculptor’s daughter-in-law and manager of the Nemon Estate, identified several possibilities and worked with us, the Speaker’s office, Architect of the Capitol Stephen Ayers and Curator Barbara Wolanin to evaluate them. Only two other estate castings of this bust are in existence: one is in the Churchill War Rooms, London; the other in the Russian World War II Museum in Moscow. Thus one of these busts now resides in each of the capitals of the “Big Three” wartime allies whose sacrifices led to final victory in 1945.

The Capitol sculpture collection requires specific donors, and The Churchill Centre was pleased to fill this role. The Nemon Estate generously supplied the bust at much less than market value and our chairman Laurence Geller agreed to cover its costs. We made a donation proposal, which was gratefully accepted, with information about Oscar Nemon and his relationship with the Churchills.

In Spring 2013 the laborious and intensive process of hand casting in the traditional lost wax method began in the British bronze foundry Pangolin Editions under the supervision of Alice Nemon-Stuart. It took four months to complete.

Working with Maria Lohmeyer of the Speaker’s Office of Special Events, we helped to plan the dedication ceremony in Statuary Hall last October 30th. In Churchillian fashion, we overcame many obstacles, including a government shutdown which furloughed many government employees weeks before the unveiling.

Believing this was the most important U.S. recognition of Sir Winston since his honorary American citizenship half a century ago, The Churchill Centre contacted the Speaker’s office and arranged for a trustee, Randolph Churchill, on behalf of his family and our Patron Lady Soames, to express appreciation and offer our services in locating an appropriate bust.

Working with the family, British Churchill organizations and the British Embassy in Washington, the Centre spent nearly two years selecting a suitable bronze, donating it to the Capitol, and helping plan the dedication ceremony in Statuary Hall last October 30th. In Churchillian fashion, we overcame many obstacles, including a government shutdown which furloughed many government employees weeks before the unveiling.

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Working with Maria Lohmeyer of the Speaker’s Office of Special Events, we helped to plan the dedication ceremony and to fill the guest list. All Members of the House and Senate were invited, and within a week almost 100 agreed to attend—the largest number of acceptances within such a short time in recent history.

The Centre invited a broad array worldwide. Besides our trustees, affiliates and supporters, there were representatives of allied institutions such as the Churchill Archives Centre, National Churchill Museum in Fulton, and the Winston Churchill Foundation of the United States. Over 300 ultimately attended, including Churchill family members Nicholas Soames, Edwina Sandys, Randolph Churchill, Jennie Churchill Repard, Duncan Sandys and Luce Churchill.

Distinguished guests included former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, the Churchill Centre UK’s Lord Marland and former Leader of the Conservative Party Lord Howard. Eleven MPs from the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, on a visit to the U.S., arranged their schedule to attend. They were joined by H.B.M. Ambassador Sir Peter Westmacott and Lady Westmacott, and senior members of the British Embassy staff. Historians present were Paul Reid, Candice Millard, Sir David Cannadine, and Hillsdale College President Larry Arnn. Representing USS Winston S. Churchill were her first and just-retiring commanding officers, Radm. Michael Franken and Cdr. Christopher Stone. George Washington University, which is partnering with the Centre in creating a new National Churchill Library and Center on its campus, was represented by President Steven Knapp, former President Stephen Joel Trachtenberg, and Provost Steven Lehrman.

An unusual twist was the presence of a prominent British entertainer, Roger Daltrey of “The Who,” to continue a tradition in previous Capitol Hill ceremonies. He performed two songs, aptly titled “Stand By Me” and his classic, “Won’t Get Fooled Again.” Mr. Daltrey and Universal Music covered the entire cost of his appearance, including guitar and percussion players and a backup group.

Statuary Hall, site of the ceremony, is among the oldest and most historic...

The ceremony began with a Churchill favorite, “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” sung by the U.S. Army Chorus. Perhaps for the first time, in a building British forces had burned in 1814, the British and American colors were presented by the Armed Forces Color Guard, and both national anthems were sung.

During his welcoming remarks, Speaker Boehner paused for moving recordings from Churchill’s great speech in 1941 and referred to Churchill’s enduring American relationship as “one of history’s true love stories. Now,” said the Speaker in emotional tones, if you’re looking for his counsel or hoping to feel a little braver, you’ll find him just down the steps from here in a rotunda that, from this day forward, will be known as the Freedom Foyer. . . . So long as we cheer Churchill’s example and defend all that he preserved, our shared and sacred cause will live on.”

Secretary of State John Kerry described the only recipient of a State Department honorary American passport as embodying “leadership in times of crisis,” a statesman who was “above all things parochial,” who “understood that even the greatest patriots are not just citizens of their own countries but citizens of the world.”

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi told of a photo in her office: Churchill addressing the 1941 Joint Session, which included her father, then a Maryland Congressman. Sir Winston, she added, “rightly belongs to the world he helped save from tyranny. He will always hold a special place in the American memory. Now, he will hold a special place in the Capitol.”

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid recalled listening to some twenty-five hours of speeches by “one of my personal heroes,” and reading William Manchester’s The Last Lion, from which he read extracts. “Today we acknowledge the debt of America that we owe to one man,” he concluded, “for saving the world from the grasp of evil and the clutches of tyranny.”

In recalling “the greatest Englishman of his time,” Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell spoke of “the boundless potential of an alliance between our two nations . . . a conviction that only spread as the momentous events of the 20th century unfolded.” He recalled Churchill’s famous words upon his retirement in 1955: “Never be separated from the Americans.” That was wise counsel, McConnell added, hoping “that these two nations, which Winston Churchill loved so deeply and whose democratic values he cherished and so ably defended, always adhere to it.”

Churchill Centre Chairman Laurence Geller expressed the Centre’s honor “to have been invited to donate this striking bust,” and gratefully acknowledged the Churchill family and two special guests, the sculptor’s daughter Lady Young and Lady Gilbert, representing Sir Martin. Nicholas Soames MP (next page) spoke on behalf of his mother Lady Soames, who watched the ceremony online.

After events at the Capitol there was a private reception hosted by the Speaker in the Capitol’s Rayburn Room, and a gala dinner at the British Embassy. Among dinner guests was Congressman John Dingell, who was a 15-year-old page in the Senate Chamber when Churchill gave his 1941 address. Mr. Dingell recently became the longest serving member in the history of Congress.

Attendees received a commemorative program and booklet prepared by The Churchill Centre with messages from Lady Soames, Sir Martin Gilbert, and the Centre’s officers, along with three selections: “Churchill on America,” “Churchill at Large” and “Churchill on Politics.” Each guest was also given a custom-made “Action This Day” pin with a card explaining Churchill’s use of this label on urgent wartime communications.

The ceremony received intense coverage from media outlets around the world, ranging from The Times to the New York Post. Even the “alternative bi-weekly” Mother Jones mentioned the event. A great Churchillian, the Wall Street Journal’s Dorothy Rabinowitz, wrote an op-ed article, “Churchill Is Home Again and Here to Stay.” Enthusiasm for the Centre’s initiative was widespread. Lady Gilbert, Lady Young, Randolph and Jennie Churchill and Edwina Sandys all complimented the organizers, and Lady Gilbert was deeply touched to represent Sir Martin—the guest we missed most of all. >>
Thousands of visitors saw the bust on display in Statuary Hall for thirty days, after which it was removed to its permanent location in newly-designated Freedom Foyer. On December 2nd, Speaker Boehner hosted a reception to mark its installation in its final location, saying to the Centre’s chairman: “On behalf of the United States Congress and the American people, thank you for all you and The Churchill Centre have done to support the cause of freedom and to immortalize the best friend America ever had.” Plans are being considered for an annual Churchill reception on Capitol Hill around November 30th.

Freedom Foyer is on the first floor of the Capitol immediately adjacent to the Crypt. Just to the side is a stone staircase, part of the original Capitol, known as the “British Steps.” It is said that these stones still bear marks from the burning of the building during the War of 1812. Churchill shares the space with Kossuth, one of the few other non-Americans to address a joint session of Congress. A third sculpture will be added at a later date.

The bust rests on a full-height plinth of natural color cream Marfa marble, also donated by The Churchill Centre. The plinth and inscription were hand cut by Hilgartner Natural Stone Company, which has produced stonework in Washington since 1863. The inscription was selected by the Architect of the Capitol and the Curator in consultation with the Speaker and Churchill Centre:

**Winston Churchill**
**1874-1965**
**Statesman**
**Defender of Freedom**
**Honorary U.S. Citizen**
“In days to come, the British and American peoples will, for their own safety and for the good of all, walk together in majesty, in justice and in peace”
**December 26, 1941**

In his war memoirs, Churchill described the joint prayer service with President Roosevelt aboard HMS Prince of Wales at Argentia Bay in August 1941: “The symbolism of the Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes draped side by side on the pulpit; the American and British chaplains sharing in the reading of the prayers…the close-packed ranks of British and American sailors, completely intermingled, sharing the same books and joining fervently together in the prayers and hymns familiar to both…. It was a great hour to live.”

For Churchillians around the world, October 30th, 2013 was an equally great hour to live. In thanking the Centre, Speaker Boehner wrote: “It is no understatement to say you were the linchpin in this effort, and I am grateful for everything The Churchill Centre has done.”

For transcripts of remarks by all speakers at the ceremony, please contact Mr. Pollack (page 2).
Mr. Jaap Engelsman in Amsterdam writes: “Since at least 1951 Churchill is said to have called Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands ‘the only true man in the Dutch government,’ or words to that effect. Can you track this quote to a reliable source?”

The only place on the Internet where we could find it is a Dutch war history site: http://bit.ly/1gTehH0s. We searched the online Churchill Archive but there are no hits for the phrase or key parts of it—frustrating because we suspect he felt that way on occasion during the war.

Churchill did have deep regard for Prime Minister Gerbrandy of the exiled Dutch government (whom he referred to as “Mr. Cherry Brandy”). Although, after the German invasion, the departure of the Queen and government was controversial in Holland, Churchill approved, since it meant Holland and her territories remained in the fight. He had hoped the French government would do the same. Gerbrandy regularly sent Churchill bottles of the fine Dutch gin “Jenever.”

P aul Wolfowitz (“Why They Mattered: Richard Williamson,” Politico, 22 December 2013) said Churchill denied calling Clement Attlee “a modest man with much to be modest about.” We think he did, but only in private. According to the late Truman aide Clark Clifford, who accompanied Churchill and Truman to Fulton for Churchill’s “Iron Curtain” speech in 1946, the President said: “Mr. Attlee came to see me the other day. He struck me as a very modest man.” WSC replied: “He has much to be modest about.” Other variations of this quotation are inaccurate.

In public, however, Churchill was more collegial toward his Labour Party rival, who had served loyally as Deputy Prime Minister during the war. WSC was once asked if he said: “An empty car drew up and Clement Attlee got out,” or that Attlee was “a sheep in sheep’s clothing.” Churchill denied this, saying Attlee was a gallant gentleman with a long record of service to his country. This was a Churchillian characteristic; whatever the political quarrels, he never lost his sense for his opponents as servants of the nation.

Churchill was a colorful character, and several of the best examples of his wit involved his fellow Tory, Lady Astor. Nancy Witcher Astor, Viscountess Astor CH (1879–1964), MP for Plymouth Sutton, 1919–45, was the first woman to take a seat in Parliament (Sinn Fein’s Countess Markievicz was elected in 1918, but did not take her seat). If Churchill got over women MPs, he never quite got over Lady Astor, who trended left despite her Tory credentials, and was a declared teetotaler.

According to Harold Nicolson (Diaries 1939-45), when Astor was making one of her last speeches in 1945, she said that when she first entered the House (1 December 1919) Churchill was cold to her, and she asked him why: “I feel you have come into my bathroom and I have only a sponge with which to defend myself,” he said. The antipathy continued at least until World War II.

After Astor and George Bernard Shaw visited Russia in 1929 Churchill wrote in his Shaw essay (Pall Mall, reprinted in Great Contemporaries): “Lady Astor, like Mr. Bernard Shaw, enjoys the best of all worlds….She denounces the vice of gambling in unmeasured terms, and is closely associated with an almost unvalled racing stable. She accepts communist hospitality and flattery, and remains the Conservative Member for Plymouth.”

Somewhat mellowing by 1944, Churchill made one of his more humorous references, pausing during a long speech on the December Greek crisis: “At this point I will take a little lubrication, if it is permissible. I think it is always a great pleasure to the Noble Lady, the Member for the Sutton Division of Plymouth, to see me drinking water.”
“Making the Impossible Possible”

The Sir Winston Churchill Award is a tough measure. Sir Winston is probably—one would say certainly—the greatest Englishman in our long history. Great not just because of his achievements, but because of his capacity to hold his course when, as almost a lone voice, he was criticised, only to be proved right in the end.

Our recipient tonight has, over the years, faced his own criticism, his own setbacks, yet held firm to his own beliefs. That is the first of many reasons he is worthy of this award.

Let me touch on some of the qualities that make me say that. First, I think that he and Sir Winston are driven by the same sense of obligation and public duty. Churchill served in Parliament for over sixty years, and held most of the principal Offices of State. His record may never be equalled.

Consider now the role of His Royal Highness. He began his public life even younger than Churchill, at the age of sixteen nearly fifty years ago. Since then, the sheer breadth of his interests and activities has been staggering—and we’d be here a long time if I attempted to list them all.

He is never simply a “name on the letterhead.” Nor does he just “turn up” at events. He takes a genuine and personal interest in every organisation with which he is involved. His care, his attention to detail, is a Churchillian trait: wherever you are, whatever you are there for, whatever the task, give everything of yourself. Not just for your own sake, but on behalf of Britain and the Commonwealth or, in Churchill’s prime, the Empire, and later the Commonwealth.

Churchill was a child of the Empire but after its birth he realised the importance of the Commonwealth. He understood its role in fostering democratic, cultural, legal and moral values, nor was he blind to its more prosaic role in promoting trade and investment. He understood, too, as well as anyone, the unique role the Royal Family plays in shaping and developing Britain’s relationships around the world.

Again our honoured guest illustrates the point. Since 1969, he has visited thirty-three Commonwealth countries, some repeatedly. Last year alone he and HRH The Duchess of Cornwall travelled to Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, Australia and Canada as part of The Queen’s Diamond Jubilee celebrations. They have only just returned from a nine-day visit to India and Sri Lanka, during which for the first time the Prince of Wales represented HM The Queen at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

Alongside this public role sits another Churchillian trait: a wish to improve society. His Royal Highness has used his national and international profile to stimulate debate and bring about change, not just here at home, but overseas as well. And his thinking has often been ahead of its time.

He is, in essence, the world’s greatest “convener.” If you have the Prince of Wales on your side, you are highly likely to succeed. Whether he is championing the cause of British rural farmers or the rain forests in far-off lands, he will bring people together and make the impossible possible.

In 1976 he founded The Prince’s Trust, which has literally transformed the lives of hundreds of thousands of disadvantaged young people. Today, he actively presides over charities that collectively form the largest multi-group charitable enterprise in the UK. These charities are active in a wide range of areas, and span every community throughout Britain. Collectively they raise over £100 million each year in support of their aims. It is an incredible legacy.

Such success doesn’t just happen magically. It requires vision and leadership—and another Churchillian quality, courage: the courage to follow one’s convictions. Sir Winston wrote: “Courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities because, as has been said, it is the quality which guarantees all others.” There are many types of courage: physical, intellectual, moral—and throughout his long public life, our recipient has demonstrated them all.

I have spoken of courage, personal conviction, dedication to duty, charitable endeavour, pride in country, and the wish to make it and the wider world a better place. All of these qualities demonstrate that His Royal Highness is not only a man of passion, but a man of action for his passions.

Yet—again like Churchill—he is wise enough to have a private hinterland, through which he finds solace and calm in an otherwise frenetic world. Lord alone knows how he ever finds time for such pursuits, but he is widely respected as an authority on gardening and landscaping, and is also an artist of distinction. If I may say so, Sir, many of us will feel a deep sense of envy at this glittering roll call of talent.

Beyond all of the above, let me close on a personal note. I have enormous admiration and respect for our recipient—which is why it gives me very great personal pleasure to have the honour and privilege to invite His Royal Highness to accept the Sir Winston Churchill Award for 2013.

Sir John Major KG CH PC was Britain’s Prime Minister from 1990 to 1997.
His Royal Highness began by declaring “how deeply touched, honoured, and, at this point, humbled” he felt by the Award, and by describing the Oscar Nemon bust with which he had been presented as, “without doubt one of the best sixty-fifth birthday presents I could have been given.”

“The extraordinary thing about getting older,” he continued, “is that suddenly you are presented with a chance to reminisce. Most of our lives when younger consist of sitting listening to older people.” As an historian he had been particularly fascinated in hearing them and asking questions.

His fond memories of Sir Winston go back to seeing him when Churchill had come to visit The Queen at Clarence House “when I was very small….I remember him vividly in the hall, with a large cigar, when he was putting on his coat and hat to go out.” He also remembered Churchill at Balmoral in the early Fifties. The tradition then was for the netting of very small trout, each year in August in Loch Muick, and everyone would take part. Sir Winston was sitting on a boulder with Lady Churchill; he picked up an enormous log and declared that he was “waiting for the Loch Muick monster”! A cine film taken by HM The Queen had reminded him of this, and of how annoying he must have been to Sir Winston at the age of five.

Of course he had been brought up on countless Churchill stories, “particularly from my great uncle, Lord Mountbatten; most of them I cannot possibly repeat on this occasion” though they were “incredibly good and very funny.” He did, however, recount an exchange between his grandfather King George VI and Sir Winston which took place one morning at a very cold airport. The King asked Sir Winston if he wanted something to warm him. Sir Winston replied, “when I was younger I made it a rule never to take strong drink before lunch. It is now my rule never to do so before breakfast.”

The Prince regretted the fact that he had not been able to ask Sir Winston about speechmaking, of which “he was the past master….Because I could not ask him, I used to sit at the feet of Harold Macmillan, who was another one of those remarkable people.” When the young Prince asked if the older statesman could give him any hints, Macmillan said that he could only tell him what Lloyd George had told him (“which is quite a good opener”)—namely that if you are addressing a huge gathering you have to use gestures, and should never make them from the elbow, always from the shoulder. The Prince then demonstrated the proposed technique, which he has never forgotten, even though he had never been able to put it into practice.

Harold Macmillan had also supplied him with a reading list, drawn from the library at Chatsworth. It started with Gibbon’s Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire which the Prince admitted he never finished, and included Buchan’s Augustus, which he wholeheartedly recommended. The list demonstrated the scale of classical education—liberal education in those days—which “enabled them to understand the great sweep of history and the way geography worked.”

The Prince spoke of his great debt to Lord Soames, late husband of our Patron Lady Soames, who taught him the power of convening. What he had tried to do over the course of the last thirty-seven years, since leaving the Royal Navy, was best summed up by what Sir Winston had said in 1908: “What is the use of living, if it not be to strive for noble causes and to make this muddled world a better place for those who will live in it after we have gone? How else can we put ourselves in harmonious relation with the great verities and constellations of the infinite and the eternal?” In so striving, he had observed the awkward truth of what Winston Churchill had said in 1906, that one is to be judged by the animosities he excites among his opponents. (See “Quotation of the Season,” page 5.)

One Churchillian relationship that the Prince had enjoyed was the lifelong friendship of Sir Winston’s grandson Nicholas Soames, whom he thanked for his “undying support, loyalty and wit.” He confirmed that he would treasure the bust which would always remind him of “one of the greatest of Englishmen.”
“Please wire immediately you receive this—don’t wait till 12 or 1 before you let me know as I have to make arrangements… I hope you will come my darling Mummy if you are well enough. Please come alone when you come as I like to have you all to myself.”

Earlier in the spring, Lord Randolph had sent Winston money for a bicycle. “It is so kind of you,” Winston wrote. “I should have written long ago only I wanted to wait until I could write and say that I could ride it. I can now, on Saturday I rode 8 miles with it, it is a beautiful little machine.” But he soon had a mishap. “I am sorry to say Winston has fallen off his bicycle.” Welldon wrote Lady Randolph on 20 June. “I do not wish you to think the hurt is serious.” It was serious enough: the diagnosis was “a slight concussion of the brain,” which left him bedridden and required “careful watching for a few days.”

It is important that a war squadron of ten fighting aeroplanes should be created at Eastchurch as quickly as possible…. The design of these aeroplanes… should all come from one maker, and should have all their parts interchangeable…. These machines should be kept quite separate from the practice and school machines, and eight of the ten should always be ready to fly.

In June he criticized a new aircraft’s controls as “a good example of what to avoid in this class of work. They are awkward, flimsy, inconveniently
shaped, and ill-secured to the fuselage. The switch is also cheap and common to the last degree. No one would think to put such fittings into a motor-car.”

Churchill had been flying for over a year and his original instructor said “he showed great promise.” But flying did not sit well with Clementine. “I have been at the Central Flying School for a couple of days,” he wrote her on 29 May “flying a little in good & careful hands & under perfect conditions. So I did not write you from there as I know you wd be vexed.”

She must have been more than a little vexed because barely a week later, he gave up flying. “I will not fly any more until at any rate you have recovered from your kitten,” he wrote her on 6 June, “& by then or perhaps later the risks may have been greatly reduced.” He did want her to know how big a sacrifice he was making:

This is a wrench because I was on the verge of taking my pilot’s certificate…But I must admit that the numerous fatalities of this year w[ould] justify you in complaining…This is a gift—so stupidly am I made—w[hich] costs me more than anything wh[ich] could be bought with money. So I am ver[y] glad to lay it at your feet, because I know it will rejoice & relieve your heart.

His flying experience was useful to a First Lord of the Admiralty: “I know the difficulties, the dangers & the joys of the air—well enough to appreciate them, & to understand all the questions of policy wh which will arise in the near future.”

75 YEARS AGO
Spring 1939 • Age 64
“Law and public faith”

On 31 March, two weeks after Hitler occupied the rump of Czechoslovakia and began making demands on Poland, Prime Minister Chamberlain gave to Poland what he had refused Czechoslovakia—a guar-
On a visit to Blarney Castle near Cork, Ireland, my wife and I were surprised to see a humorous cartoon plaque depicting Churchill and comic actor Oliver Hardy. It shows them squeezed together on the steps of the castle tower, ascending to reach the legendary Blarney Stone. It reads in part: “You will learn more of the story of the stone as you pass the Castle Chamber. Take care as you mount the winding stairs and, if you think the way is narrow, consider the two who went before you….Eloquence is not just a gift for the sylph-like.”

The plaque raised questions: When and why was Churchill there? Who was with him? It would be nice to know he was one of the many statesmen, literary giants, actors and pilgrims who “kissed the Blarney Stone”—an act which, legend says, provides the Irish gift of blarney, known more broadly as the “gift of gab.”

Back home I reviewed Churchill’s books and those of his biographers Martin Gilbert, Roy Jenkins, and William Manchester, finding no references to Blarney Castle. The Churchill Centre and Churchill Archives Centre found no evidence, although *Finest Hour* provided two related stories (see sidebars). I turned to British, Empire and American newspapers, and was delighted to find Churchill’s visit reported in July 1912. This story is based on the reports of those newspapers.

**Visit to Queenstown**

On 24 October 1911, Prime Minister H.H. Asquith announced Churchill’s appointment as First Lord of the Admiralty, civilian head of the Royal Navy. “For the next two and a half years Churchill made naval preparation his task,” wrote Martin Gilbert, “visiting naval stations and dockyards, seeking to master the intricacies of naval gunnery and tactics, scrutinising the development of German naval construction, and working to improve naval morale.”

One of the First Lord’s inspection visits was to Ireland, then still part of the United Kingdom despite a strong drive for Home Rule. (Advocates for Home Rule, including Churchill, never of course contemplated Britain giving up her Irish naval bases.)

On Tuesday, 2 July 1912, accompanied by other members of the Board of Admiralty, Churchill arrived in Queenstown, a seaport about 15 miles (25km) from the City of Cork. First called “Cobh” (“the Cove of Cork”), it was renamed “Queenstown” in 1850 to commemorate a visit by Queen Victoria, and reverted to Cobh in

“Mr. Churchill is a dangerous public man, according to all the traditions, for the learned lexicographers state that he who kisses the Blarney Stone is endowed with the power ‘to blarney,’ and ‘to blarney,’ they say, is to humbug with wheedling talk so as to gain a desired end....”

—Washington Post, 28 July 1912

Mr. Glueckstein, of Kings Park, New York, is a regular contributor to *Finest Hour* and author of “Churchill and the Barbary Macaques” in *Finest Hour* 161.
1920. Located on the south side of Great Island, this was the last landfall for British westbound steamers. Ten weeks earlier, the ill-fated RMS *Titanic* had called at Queenstown before heading into the Atlantic for her fatal meeting with the iceberg.

Of special interest to the First Lord was the long-established naval base on the small island of Haulbowline, across the strait from Queenstown. First fortified in 1602 for its strategic and deepwater location, Haulbowline had been an army base before being handed over to the navy, which established a large arsenal; a naval dockyard was added during the Napoleonic Wars.4

It was Churchill’s first visit to the base and to the leading figures of Cork, including representatives of the Harbour Board, the Chambers of Commerce, and trade and labor organizations. According to *The Times*, Churchill said “he was glad to see for himself that the fine harbour was so strongly fortified and with a dockyard in many ways admirably equipped for the purposes for which it was conceived,” and assured officials that the navy had no plans to downgrade Haulbowline. “On the contrary, the fact that [the Admiralty] had been led and forced, owing to developments elsewhere, to concentrate so large a proportion of the British Fleet around our own islands, made it necessary that they should utilize to the full the berthing accommodation and docking and repairing facilities which existed at home.”5

Churchill said Admiralty experts saw “considerable possibilities of the harbour at Queenstown being made available for the reception of a certain number of vessels of the Third Fleet. They would not expect him to go into details for all these matters had to be most carefully studied. Whatever decisions were taken must be decisions for which there was sound financial argument and for which there were good military reasons….6

At the end of his tour, his hosts invited Churchill to visit Blarney Castle, about six miles from Cork, and “kiss the Blarney Stone”—assuring himself, according to legend, of verbal eloquence and skill at flattery. If the historian in Churchill was interested in the Stone’s >>

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**Distant Connections**

Consuelo Montagu, Duchess of Manchester (1858-1909) was one of those friends on whom Jennie [Lady Randolph Churchill] could always depend for love and laughter. The other Consuelo, the young Duchess of Marlborough, had written that Jennie had a fund of risque stories which she told with a twinkle in her eye. Most of these had first been told to Jennie by the older Consuelo…. She had a graceful figure, golden hair, large dark eyes, and an angelic expression. Yet she was the kind of woman who, while riding in a carriage to a Court Ball, decided that her stays were too tight and that she was going to remove her corset. And so she did, twisting and wrenching it out over her breast, much to the astonishment of her escort.

She was probably also the “American Duchess” who upon returning from Ireland was asked whether she had seen the Blarney Stone. “Yes, certainly I have,” the Duchess replied. “Well,” the man said with a smile, “they do say that the virtues of the Blarney Stone can be conveyed to another by a kiss.” “I guess that may be,” she answered, “but I don’t know anything about it, because I sat on it.”

origins, they may have told him of the Goddess Cliodhna: When Cormac Laidir MacCarthy, builder of Blarney Castle, was involved in a lawsuit, he appealed to Cliodhna, who told him to kiss the first stone he found in the morning on his way to court. MacCarthy did so, pleaded his case with great eloquence, and won handily. He incorporated the rock into the parapet of the castle, where it became known as the Blarney Stone.

At Blarney Castle
Churchill drove by car to Blarney Castle accompanied by Lord Mayor of Cork James Simcox, Civil Lord of the Admiralty Sir Francis Hopwood, and Cork Harbour Commission Chairman Sir James Long. There they ascended the 100-foot-high tower, climbing the 125 challenging steps. The Blarney Stone is embedded in the outside wall, the top of it just a few feet below the summit of the structure.

When Churchill was there, kissing the stone involved more risk than today: it was necessary for a person to lean backwards over the parapet, held by the ankles, and lowered until one’s face reached “kissing level,” whence one planted the requisite smack on its blue surface.

“Mr. Churchill entered into the spirit of the visit,” reported *The Times*..., “removing his hat, he got upon the parapet and, in a perpendicular position, with Sir James Long holding his legs, planted his lips on the Stone.”

Amid the cheers of onlookers, his private secretary Eddie Marsh followed suit.

Churchill and his party returned to Cork, where he displayed his gift of blarney, saying that a strong navy was necessary to withstand foreign dangers.

Among the newspapers reporting his trip was a London reporter for the *Washington Post*. Invoking legend, the writer quipped that after kissing the rock, Churchill “was metamorphosed as truly as Faust into a new being. Henceforth Mr. Churchill is a dangerous public man, according to all the traditions, for the learned lexicographers state that he who kisses the Blarney Stone is endowed with the power ‘to blarney,’ and ‘to blarney,’ they say, is to humbug with wheedling talk so as to gain a desired end...”

The trip is a mere footnote in Churchill’s life, but the story of the Blarney Stone undoubtedly appealed to his love of legends, from King Alfred’s burnt cakes to Gibraltar’s Barbary Apes. Did kissing the Stone bestow Churchill with his gift to speak with wit, charm and persuasion? Perhaps it only augmented what was already obvious by 1912.

The Blarney Castle administrator amusingly answers this speculation: “Churchill visited in 1912. Let’s keep to the facts. He kissed the Stone. He became the greatest orator of the 20th century. You fill in the gaps.”

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**Endnotes**

1. A sylph is a mystical, invisible being of the air, sometimes a slight, graceful girl. The quote is part of a longer narrative on the plaque. Oliver Hardy, and his comic partner Stan Laurel, did visit Blarney Castle, but while Laurel kissed the Stone, Hardy declined.
4. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.: “Mr. Churchill at Blarney Castle.”
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
Inside the Journals

Abstracts by Antoine Capet

Germany and Disarmament
Between the Wars


This work examines British Tory attitudes towards the Weimar Republic through the lens of several issues from the 1918 Armistice to the 1923 Ruhr Crisis. A curious feature of British Conservative opinion at that time was its consistent hostility towards the new democratic German state. To be sure, Britain had fought a long and costly war with Germany, and passions had not cooled.Though from late 1918, the German government was committed to democratic principles Britain claimed to favour, many Tories doubted that the change was genuine or stable. During its formative years the Weimar Republic faced challenges that would have tested any nation. Political and economic conditions within Germany undermined the new government's prospects; yet many Tories refused to consider these challenges. Ironically, the attitudes of British Conservatives added to the difficulties Weimar Germany faced in dealing with the postwar world.


The Destroyers-for-Bases agreement of September 1940 was a milestone in establishing the Anglo-American relationship, but is best understood in the context of British policy towards the West Indies that developed in response to initiatives from the U.S. well before the agreement. Beginning in 1938, the British Foreign Office used West Indian colonies as bargaining counters to win American friendship—but also to avoid or at least control creeping American influence over these possessions. This perspective better explains the policy context of the Destroyer-Bases deal, which signalled not only a turning point in the war but also of British attitudes towards its Empire in the face of mounting American power.


The traditional interpretation of British foreign policy during the Geneva Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments casts Britain as an honest broker, striving to bring France and Germany together in a bid to square their differences over security and equality. But from the Foreign Office perspective, Britain played broker between the former World War I allied powers and Germany on the other.

This activity had two particular strands. The Foreign Office wanted first to secure French support for any disarmament programme before seeking German support; and second to circumscribe German military potential where possible. This is a new interpretation of the Foreign Office's role and aims. Arguably, in 1932-34, Churchill did not want Britain to act as an “honest broker” between France and Germany, but to side resolutely with France.


This article on British foreign policy during and after the Second World War argues that an unapologetic attitude to the past by the British Foreign Office often entailed the adoption of evasive legal formulae. Thus, while the German Federal Republic and Czechoslovakia achieved a modus vivendi over the events of 1938 by 1973, the British refused to repudiate Munich ab initio, and applauded the West German decision to do the same. London steadfastly maintained this position until 1992, when the Cold War ended and Czechoslovakia rejoined the ranks of democratic nations.

This article explores the reasoning behind the British policy. While historians frequently discussed the “shame” of Munich, British policymakers rarely expressed guilt, seeking instead a benign view of the Munich agreement. Furthermore, many of the actions of the British government during the Second World War, not least with regard to the Katyn massacres and at the Yalta Conference, reinforced the idea that Munich had been a creature of its time, a “necessary evil.” (See Munich articles this issue, pages 12-31.)

Drawing extensively on primary sources, this is a contribution to the historiography of British foreign relations and that of collective institutional memory and appeasement.

Professor Capet is head of British Studies at the University of Rouen, France.
A. W. Beasley, a retired orthopedic surgeon in New Zealand with a keen interest in medical history and biography, fills a niche in Churchill studies with this record of Sir Winston’s medical conditions. The book reiterates much that is known, albeit scattered in various publications, but also adds fresh information from sources such as the Churchill Archives Centre. Stylistically the text is clear, with quotations in bold format, richly enhanced with many illustrations not previously seen in print.

Designed to attract a broad spectrum of readers, the book is notably free of medical jargon, and its review of medical practice in Churchill’s time is one of its qualities. Clear explanations in lay language address the significance of each medical problem and the efficacy of its treatment. Unfortunately the discussion of Churchill’s depression is misleading because it does not recognize it as a component of a likely mood disorder or a “cyclothymic personality,” as diagnosed by Sir Winston’s neurologist, Lord Brain.

The first nine chapters present Churchill’s medical history for each decade of his life, concluding with a table summarizing his medical problems. The tenth and final chapter summarizes some of his personality traits, commenting on his sense of invincibility, his alleged poor judgment, the effects of alcohol, his fascination with hats and uniforms, and his adoption of the V-sign.

Beasley also offers a critical evaluation of Lord Moran, Churchill’s primary physician from 1940 through 1965.

Each chapter carries thoughtful but not exhaustive references and notes. One curious omission is reference to Churchill’s Last Years by Roy Howells, WSC’s personal nurse after 1958. References to other relevant papers and articles might have provided a more scholarly and complete account, but would have also required further analysis by the author. For example: was Churchill’s speech impediment a lisp or a stutter? Among Moran’s many prescribed medications, was there a stimulant (amphetamine), and if so, when was it taken?

Had Dr. Beasley obtained full access to Moran’s medical papers on Churchill at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, and those of the orthopedist Professor Seddon at the Royal College of Surgeons, some of his observations and conclusions might have been different. For instance, the cardiologist Sir John Parkinson saw Churchill after his purported heart attack in December 1941 and corrected the Prime Minister’s claim of a coronary thrombosis. “He may have had a temporary embarrassment of the circulation (to his heart),” wrote Parkinson, “but there was nothing to prove this.”

The book ends with brief biogra-
physical sketches of those around Churchill, including many of his physicians and surgeons. Neither here nor elsewhere are they all identified. Missing are the ENT surgeon Wilson, who regularly sprayed Churchill’s throat prior to his speeches; the dermatologists MacCormack and MacKenna, who treated WSC for persistent skin diseases; and the ophthalmologists King and Juler, who managed his recurrent eye infections.

The most peculiar thread is the author’s animus toward Lord Moran, Churchill’s physician from 1940 to the end of his life. Here he builds upon themes developed in a 2010 paper, where he castigated Moran for publishing his 1966 book *Churchill: The Struggle for Survival 1940-1965*. Beasley dismisses Churchill’s depression as a “largely Moran-inspired myth,” adding: “as a historian Moran was a fraudster”: a man whose nickname, Corkscrew Charlie, “attests to his devious character.” Finally Beasley acknowledges “the meanness I have had to record of Lord Moran himself.” Ironically, much of the book relies heavily on Moran’s descriptions.

Lord Moran was criticized by some of Churchill’s close friends for cashing in on his professional relationship immediately after Sir Winston died, and historians have noted that some of what is in his book is not in Moran’s contemporary diaries. But this is not the whole story, as Lady Soames has observed: “Lord Moran understood my father thoroughly and he was indeed fortunate he had as his doctor a man who understood not only the medical considerations and risks to his patient, but who was fully aware of the implications, with regard to the office he held, of his condition at any time.” That is a more balanced perspective than we get in this book.

But this is not to suggest that Dr. Beasley’s work is anything but a “must” for anyone wishing to understand the effects of Churchill’s illnesses on his career. The book particularly demonstrates Churchill’s lifelong resilience and amazing hardiness. The title is most fitting—he was the “Supreme Survivor.” The author increases our appreciation of WSC’s fortitude and determination to overcome his many medical problems.

Mr. Shepherd is Associate Archivist of The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

Matters of Interpretation

WILLIAM JOHN SHEPHERD

This book is a partial sequel to the author’s 2009 biography, *Paul Dirac: Mystic of the Atom*, a collective biography of the mostly-British protégés of pioneering Cambridge physicist Ernest Rutherford; their work in developing nuclear weapons with leaders like Churchill; and Britain’s relations over atomic matters with Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower. The earlier book could have been titled *Churchill and the Scientists*, like the BBC docu-drama *Churchill and the Generals*, depicting WSC’s adversarial relationships with his experts. In the *Dirac*, Churchill is quoted saying “scientists should be on tap, not on top” (320). *Churchill’s Bomb* puts the scientists “on top.”

Farmelo argues that Churchill the political leader lacked the foresight of Churchill the writer. While no academic, Churchill was a critical thinker Hence” (1931), provocatively asked whether nuclear energy would provide vast new sources of energy, or gravely jeopardize humanity unless controlled through spiritual and moral development (43).

Alas, Farmelo continues, after Churchill became prime minister he squandered Britain’s scientific lead to the Americans, in part because he had to focus on short-term, practical military means to survive the Nazi onslaught—while the U.S., safe across the Atlantic, had more time, space and resources to develop nuclear weapons.

Churchill is criticized for favoring one scientist, his friend “The Prof,” Frederick Lindemann (later Lord Cherwell) over all the others. The PM loved Lindemann’s brief, cogent, jargon-free summaries of complicated scientific ideas, Farmelo writes, but was unaware or unconcerned that The Prof was alienated from many colleagues because of his abrasive manner and “confused thinking about space and time in quantum theory” (48).

Repeatedly Farmelo cites the PM’s and Lindemann’s weakness for “gadgets” which offered at best only slight military advantage—counter >>
to the thesis of David Edgerton in *Britain’s War Machine* (FH 155). The Nobel Prize-winning Danish physicist Niels Bohr, whom Farmelo calls an “honorary Brit” (281), was “a man of exceptional wisdom” (7) who was shabbily treated by Churchill and Roosevelt. Bohr’s exceptional wisdom proposed sharing atomic secrets with the Soviets, which some have suggested would have avoided a postwar arms race, a chimeric notion that gets more credit than it deserves.

Churchill, Farmelo continues, was unable to deal effectively with the American presidents. After Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt offered Britain participation in a joint nuclear project, but Churchill wasted months in responding, missing “the great opportunity given to him by his nuclear scientists” (203). By June 1942 they had agreed to work on equal terms, though within months the Americans were restricting exchanges of information. In August 1943, we read, Churchill belatedly understood the importance of the bomb—odd, given what he had written about it in 1924. Thus WSC secured another agreement that information would flow, and that neither power would use the bomb without approval of the other. This agreement too eventually fell apart. Britain, Farmelo concludes, would have been better served had Churchill accepted the original 1941 offer. But how good was that, given Farmelo’s descriptions of Roosevelt as “slippery” (189) and “unreliable” (226)?

After Roosevelt’s death, Churchill approved Truman’s use of the bomb to end the war. He then left office to become what Farmelo considers a “weak and ineffective” leader of the opposition (332), writing war memoirs with “misremembered anecdotes, unqualified praise for the Prof, and no personal regrets” (341).

Evoking the image of Churchill as warmonger, circulated by his enemies many times over fifty years, the author dwells on Churchill’s (momentary and private) contemplation of a preemptive nuclear strike on the Soviets. Once the Soviets acquire the bomb in 1949, however, Churchill becomes obsessed with the prospect of a nuclear Armageddon. Prime Minister again in late 1951, he undertakes a quixotic crusade as a peacemaker, promoting a grand summit with the Americans and Soviets—fruitless efforts which, says Farmelo, did little more than annoy the parties involved, including his own government.

The book is well written, with thirty-five unnumbered chapters, effectively fusing science and history, despite some idiosyncratic vocabulary, such as “wheezes” (115), “cadged” (247), and “frenemy” (338). Unlike the English edition there are no illustrations, though credible sources are referenced. The result is an ambivalent work providing a good account of the development of nuclear weapons from the perspective of the mostly left-leaning scientists, along with a polemic against Churchill and Lindemann.

Given the hand he had to play, and the predilections of his partners in the White House, we might wonder: what else could Churchill have done? But hindsight is cheap and easily indulged. One of the few things Churchill and The Prof got right, Farmelo concludes, was the postwar establishment of Churchill College Cambridge (the British MIT), where the author is a fellow, and which houses the papers of Churchill and many of the scientists involved in the story.
modern color photographs, many taken by the author. Each relatively compact chapter starts with an epigrammatic extract from one of Churchill’s relevant published works: London to Ladysmith via Pretoria (1900), Ian Hamilton’s March (1900), and My Early Life: A Roving Commission (1930). These and other Churchill citations are supplemented and sometimes contradicted by other contemporary accounts, ranging from British officers and civilians to various Boer reminiscences.

Schoeman’s writing is generally accurate. The problem, as with the foregoing book by Farmelo, is interpretation. Churchill allegedly said, “I am easily satisfied with the best.” Schoeman is easily satisfied with the worst—the worst possible view of Churchill on any given occasion.

A prime example is the matter of Alan Bruce, a rival pressured by Churchill and other officers to resign from the army. Bruce’s angry father accused Churchill of homosexual conduct (then a crime), though he quickly backed down and paid damages when threatened with a libel suit. This is well documented in the official biography, which dismisses the homosexuality charge but admits that Churchill’s actions were “injudicious.”

But Schoeman cites Ted Morgan’s Churchill: The Rise to Failure (1983), which judges Churchill’s behavior as “shameful.” Though Morgan labeled the homosexual charge “preposterous,” Schoeman doesn’t mention that. In fact, he goes one step further, citing a 1990 homosexual publication with an alleged confession Churchill made to actor-composer Ivor Novello.

Overall, Schoeman tries to demonstrate that Churchill’s accounts were dishonest or otherwise exaggerated, though many of the issues raised are inherently ambiguous and irresolvable. Concerning which Boer soldier captured Churchill, Schoeman takes pains to show it could not have been South African statesman Louis Botha, though this has been known for years. Churchill’s offer of parole to the Boers in return for his release, not mentioned in his writings; conflicting versions of Churchill’s escape (fellow officer Aylmer Haldane said WSC left his fellow prisoners in the lurch); and the authenticity of the famous Boer wanted poster offering £25 for Churchill’s recapture, are all given ink. One hopes that the author is being tongue-in-cheek when he wonders if Churchill paid for the bottle of peach preserves he removed from the home of the Boer Weilbach Family in the town of Heilbron (177).

Churchill’s South Africa is an aesthetically attractive if pint-sized coffee table book that spares no effort in raising questions about Churchill’s honor and veracity, with snide and often irrelevant criticism. Churchill wrote in his first book that nothing was “more exhilarating as to be shot at without result.” In the 21st century, nearly fifty years after his death, no historical figure is a larger target than Sir Winston, as a global flock of writers figuratively blaze away—with the same exhilarating lack of result.

Another “Operation Hope Not”

DAVID FREEMAN


As the Second World War in Europe wound down in the spring of 1945, Prime Minister Churchill became deeply concerned by reports he received about the disappearance of Polish leaders and members of the Polish resistance under Soviet occupation. Grimly aware that defending Polish independence had been Britain’s stated purpose for declaring war in 1939, Churchill commissioned the Chiefs of Staff in April 1945 to draw up a most desperate scheme. The Chiefs of Staff duly commissioned a detailed plan from the Joint Planning Staff (JPS), which reported in May. Since no successful test of an atomic weapon had yet taken place, the operation outlined a large-scale conventional war that would attempt to secure a Polish nation free from Soviet control.

Although once a close-guarded secret, Britain’s plans for a possible war with the Soviet Union, “Operation Unthinkable,” were long ago declassified. Jonathan Walker, though, is the first historian to give the subject a thorough going over, relating as he does the origins, details of and ultimate fate of the plan.

The Joint Planning Staff report began with several key assumptions, starting with the belief that the undertaking would have “the full support of public opinion in both the British Empire and the United States.” Obviously, there was no chance of this, and >>
the plan was never even shown to the Americans.

Apart from political realities, logistics also made the plan unviable. Any preparations for an attack would have been immediately apparent to Soviet forces in eastern Germany. No surprise could be achieved, and in any case the Red Army had a vast numerical advantage over British and American military units.

“Our view,” the Chiefs of Staff informed Churchill, “is that once hostilities begin, it would be beyond our power to win a quick but limited success and we should be committed to a protracted war against heavy odds.” The Prime Minister replied: “By retaining the code name UNTHINKABLE, the Staffs will realize that this remains a precautionary study of what, I hope, is still a purely hypothetical contingency.”

Poland could not be saved by force of arms, and Churchill—as he invariably did on such matters—heeded the advice of his Chiefs of Staff. But Churchill had not forgotten the Poles and perceived every possibility to help them ought at least to be explored.

Dr. Bell is a professor of history at Dalhousie University, and author of Churchill and Sea Power.
Real Reason for Dieppe?

TERRY REARDON

One Day in August, by David O'Keefe.
Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 496 pages, $35.

Dieppe, in 1941—the largest amphibious raid since Gallipoli in 1915—was a disaster. Troops landed at wrong locations, defences were much heavier than anticipated, and an unexpected naval encounter alerted the defenders. On the beach, Allied troops were sitting ducks for Germans in the surrounding cliffs. Most of the invaders were Canadian: of 4963 Canadians engaged, only 2104 returned to England.

In a wholly new slant to the operation, Quebec professor David O'Keefe spent twenty years examining thousands of historical documents, some only recently released. He provides a thorough insight into British code-breaking at Bletchley and its successes in reading enemy messages. Alas these were from the three-rotor Enigma machine; by late 1941 the Germans had introduced a four-rotor Enigma which brought code-breaking to a halt. O'Keefe therefore contends that the major objective of the Dieppe raid was to steal code books, documents and equipment, known to be in the Dieppe headquarters, which would allow Bletchley Park to regain mastery of the Enigma messages.

Historians had acknowledged an “intelligence” aspect to the raid that was not part of the “official” mission, but O’Keefe argues that what he refers to as a “pinch” operation to obtain code equipment was larger than previously recognized. He incidentally notes that Ian Fleming, later the creator of James Bond, was heavily involved as personal assistant to the Director of Naval Intelligence.

The problem is O’Keefe’s crisp dismissal of the “official” objectives of the raid. Discounting the need to take pressure off the Russians, he says Stalin was satisfied with the “relocated second front,” namely North Africa, set to occur a few months later. But why, if Stalin was so satisfied, did Churchill fly to Moscow to reassure him that the western allies were committed to offensive actions? In Moscow, part of Churchill’s assurances were to tell Stalin of the upcoming Dieppe raid, although he exaggerated the number of troops and tanks involved. O’Keefe also brushes aside the second official objective, that Dieppe was a prelude to D-Day—despite testimony by Churchill, Alanbrooke, and the historians Martin Gilbert and David Reynolds.

There surely was a need to break the new Enigma code, but it is difficult to accept that a major operation like Dieppe would have been launched for that reason alone. Ironically, O’Keefe admits, just two months after Dieppe a group of Royal Navy sailors “pinched” a four-rotor Enigma machine in Port Said, Egypt, and the Bletchley Park decoders were again able to read Nazi messages.

This is a well-written, important addition to the Dieppe canon, but readers should make up their own minds up when considering the author’s conclusion.
“We cannot undo the past, but we are bound to pass it in review in order to draw from it such lessons as may be applicable to the future....”
—WSC, House of Commons, 16 April 1936

The Churchill Centre
Twenty Years On

The Churchill Centre was founded out of the old International Churchill Society at Boston on 26 October 1995 “to inspire leadership, statesmanship, vision and courage through the thoughts, words, works and deeds of Winston Spencer Churchill.” An endowment campaign was begun, through which members known as “Churchill Centre Associates” raised an investment endowment of over $1.3 million. We promised that they would forever be honored by this publication, and their names still appear on the inside front cover. Approaching our 20th anniversary, it seems appropriate to recall the Centre’s many accomplishments since that time and some of the people who have made them possible.


While the Centre has produced over twenty specialized publications, it was early recognized that it should not compete with commercial publishers, but instead provide the talent or material by which books not otherwise publishable might appear. All were volunteers: contributors came for expenses only and while the book editor might have received a modest honorarium, book earnings contributed to the Centre’s further endeavors. We are unalterably proud of the four books that resulted, which are still available at Amazon, Bookfinder.com, or the Centre (in the case of Curt Zoller’s book, page 54).


This book collects presentations at The Churchill Centre’s First Churchill Symposium, held in conjunction with the Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C.

To understand the many under-reported episodes where Winston Churchill played the role of peacemaker, we examined his actions: How did Churchill further peace from the Boer War to the Cold War? What were his approaches during the Second World War, when he was finally a principal peacemaker, rather than a lesser player or an observer? Not everyone agreed, and the controversies continue—which is all to the good.


This book resulted from a colloquium at Fulton on the 50th Anniversary of Churchill’s “Iron Curtain” speech, which forms the first part. At the end is a fifty-year perspective by Lady Thatcher, presented during the anniversary celebrations in March 1996. In the middle are papers by historians analyzing aspects of the original Fulton speech.

Basking, as we were then, in post-Cold War euphoria, Thatcher seemed almost retrograde when she warned against the revival of a strident Russian foreign policy, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of “rogue states” which she called the “single most awesome threat of modern times.” And here we are in 2014, facing those very threats. But as our Fulton scholars noted, journalists and the public didn’t recognize the significance of Churchill’s speech until much later, also. >>
Churchill Centre, 1995–2014...


From February through June 2004, the Library of Congress, the Churchill Archives Centre and The Churchill Centre presented a major exhibition emphasizing Sir Winston’s lifelong links with the United States, through generous support of John W. Kluge and the Annenberg Foundation. Exhibits ranged from a 1706 letter by John Churchill, First Duke of Marlborough, to the Order of Service for Sir Winston’s funeral in 1965. The first such display in the United States, it was rich in newly uncovered Churchill letters and documents.

This book was financed by The Churchill Centre, which played a vital supporting role by working with the Library to organize an opening reception including Lady Soames, Celia Sandys and Winston Churchill. The book illustrates the connections between Churchill and America through examples from the exhibit. Finally, the Centre was responsible for organizing and sponsoring two academic symposia: “Churchill and Three Presidents,” with Piers Brendon and Warren Kimball (Roosevelt); David Reynolds and Arnold Offner (Truman); and Klaus Larres and John Ramsden (Eisenhower). The symposiarch was James W. Muller. A second symposium, in June, was “Churchill’s View of America.”

The Great Republic exhibit drew on a wide array of materials including documents, letters, photographs, prints, maps, audio-visual aids, and three-dimensional artifacts. Audio-visual kiosks featured key Churchill speeches, such as his 1941 address to Congress and his March 1946 “Iron Curtain” speech at Fulton, Missouri, and the influences of his thought on people today, as in the aftermath of 11 September 2001. An accompanying online exhibition averaged three million viewers per month. Two teacher institutes provided educators with the opportunity to learn about and develop strategies to teach about Churchill’s life and times, and a documentary film was offered by the Library of Congress.

This tremendous accomplishment was an example of how The Churchill Centre brought scholars and expertise into major collaboration with the Library of Congress and Churchill Archives Centre in a multi-media educational experience on every level of access. It remains one of the Centre’s proudest accomplishments.


The work of a lifetime by Curt Zoller, this book was a mere dream until The Churchill Centre persuaded M.E. Sharpe to publish it by guaranteeing a minimum order. Our effort paid off, because nowhere else can you find such a compilation.

Zoller listed some 684 works in his most important Section A (books about WSC). The most fun are the annotations, often pungent, based on Finest Hour book reviews. In a book of Churchill speeches said to “reveal a man completely self-absorbed and egotistically uninterested in the opinions of anyone else” we noted that it included famous Churchill speeches about Lloyd George, Chamberlain and Roosevelt. Another book was “a compendium of vitriol that is hard to beat for twisted facts and out-of-context quotes...recommended for the library that must have everything.”

If you want a reference to everything about Churchill published through 2004, and crisp opinions as to its worth, this book is for you. Copies cost $65 and up on Amazon and Bookfinder.com, but The Centre’s office in Illinois still has a few copies left at $50 postpaid.

“What is the use of living, if it be not to strive for noble causes and to make this muddled world a better place for those who will live in it after we are gone?”

—WSC, Dundee 1908
ABSTRACT

Canadians valued their independence even while cherishing their special political relationship to Britain and the Empire. With Churchill’s Britain the major ally, Canada tended to be subsumed in Anglo-American negotiations over the conduct of the war, a pattern that alternately pleased and annoyed wartime Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King, who projected a world role for Canada as the most important member of the British Commonwealth. Because Canadians sought, within the clear limitations of their economic and military strength, to play a global role during and after the war, hemispheric organizations and structures [which FDR promoted] held no appeal.*

Churchill from 1939 through 1945 subordinated Canada to the Anglo-American alliance that, along with the Soviet Union, defeated Nazi Germany. In his wonderful way, Sir Winston blithely assumed—a dangerous act for leaders—that the Empire would support the mother country. He was wrong to a greater degree than he expected about the Indians and the Irish, but not about the Canadians.

Churchill eventually came to understand and praise Canada’s contributions to that victory, though largely as an afterthought. Hurt feelings and nationalist sensitivities aside, Canada not only gave great support to the Grand Alliance, but did what was best for Canada.


This talk is in a small way an act of contrition. In *The Juggler*, my study of Franklin Roosevelt’s wartime leadership, I failed to give proper attention to Canadian-American affairs. As a Canadian historian pointed out, five pages on the subject is hardly sufficient.¹

Since 1945, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, arguments occurred among Canadian historians over whether Canada was ignored to the point of insult by Anglo-Americans when it came to “equality of status” during the war. Were Canadians given an appropriate role in decision-making? Or were they, in the words of one Canadian historian, “fearful colonials”?

Many joined the historiographical struggle, but the two heavyweights were the late Charles Stacey, official historian of the Canadian Army in World War II, and J.L. (Jack) Granatstein, professor emeritus at York University. Their argument relates to Canada’s self-image and self-respect, and to Canadian-American relations. Another Canadian, military historian John Alan English, described Canada as “a passive receiver of information and direction….” Stacey, referring specifically to the >>

Professor Kimball, a senior editor of *FH*, edited the Roosevelt-Churchill Correspondence and has written extensively on the Allied leaders in World War II. He spent two years at St. Jerome’s College in Kitchener, Ontario, and two of his grandparents were born in New Brunswick.
two Quebec conferences but by inference to the entire war, wrote that “Canada played merely the part of host, providing the whisky and soda, and was not admitted to the strategic discussions.” Granatstein, admitting that Stacey had a point, suggested there was more to the story. Simply put, did Canada have “a legitimate claim to direct representations...?” Stacey and English denigrated Mackenzie King for not pressing forcefully for a greater role in strategic decisions, but Granatstein expressed admiration for the way King managed the Canadian role, and his domestic challenges.2

My question is a bit different. It is not what Canada should have been or should have done during the war, but what it actually did do to promote victory in a war almost all Canadians came to support. Given the limited role Canada was able or allowed to play, the events before Pearl Harbor were essentially what created the results.

Canada’s Role and Canada’s Need

When the war began in 1939, Canada was still in the throes of the Depression. Economic growth was needed, and wartime production did the trick. The transformation of the Canadian war industry mirrored, if not exceeded (in percentages) the storied war production “miracle” in the U.S. But production ultimately requires purchasers.3

Britain was growing desperately short of the cash it needed to buy war materiel from its Empire and the United States. In as “unsordid” an act as Lend-Lease, Canada extended Britain a “sterling overdraft”—best described as an open line of credit or a dollar loan, since Canadian dollars were easily transferrable into U.S. dollars—allowing the UK to purchase the sinews of war during 1939-41 when America was officially “neutral.” It was that seemingly unselfish act that allowed Britain to continue to purchase arms in Canada, getting the True North’s economy rolling. The hoped-for geopolitical bonus was the survival of Britain, which would (and did) preserve Canada’s security.4

To put war production in perspective, Canada was fourth among the Allies at $10.9 billion, with impressive totals in heavy goods—merchant ships, aircraft, military and armored vehicles. In April 1941 Roosevelt, during one of his many meetings with Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King (they met sixteen times between 1938 and 1945), astonished the Canadian leader by agreeing to let the British use Lend-Lease to obtain Canadian-made goods, as well as committing the U.S. to purchase virtually any Canadian war production.

That “reciprocal procurement of munitions” allowed King’s government to avoid the politically uncomfortable fixes of either getting U.S. loans or Lend-Lease. No part of the British Empire contributed more, in the most practical sense, than Canada. King’s version of “it’s the economy, stupid,” played well with Canadians. Canada seemed “to have bled herself white,” but that spending enabled the country to come out of the war financially secure and with a powerful industrial capability. Unemployment simply disappeared. Only the issue of conscription (the draft) posed a wartime political challenge.5

Mackenzie King did have to steer a potentially fractious Canada through the war without getting distracted by domestic disputes in a nation made up of many different European immigrant groups. The Québécois had comprised Canada’s version of the isolationists, and the conscription debates there in the 1940s echoed those of 1917, even though they seemed driven more by opposition to centralization than by lack of support for the war. German and Ukrainian groups also opposed conscription. King avoided conscription for most of the war, by which time even the Québécois had subsided. Negligible unemployment and prosperity surely helped. Little wonder that, as Granatstein put it, when King’s government “won reelection in June 1945 (something Churchill could not do in Britain), thanks in substantial part to surprisingly heavy support from Quebec voters, he knew that his policy had been the right one.”6

Less important in the long run than the economics, but perhaps more interesting, was the politics of war. Consider this: in 1939, shortly after the Nazi-Soviet Pact was revealed, Canada gave the U.S. formal assurances that it could use Halifax as an advanced air service base if needed. There was little question where Canadian-American defense planning was going, though it took a bit of time to get there.7

The Road to Ogdensburg

Nearly a year later, on 16 August 1940, Roosevelt telephoned King and suggested a dinner meeting the following day in Ogdensburg, New York, some sixty miles south of Ottawa. FDR
Lord Cranborne, the Dominions Office Secretary, complained that Ogdensburg was a defensive alliance between the United States and a British Dominion, made without consultation with London. He wanted Churchill to say just that to both parties. Churchill demurred. “All these transactions,” he said, “will be judged in a mood different to that prevailing while the issue still hangs in the balance.” Aware that American support was far more valuable than pride, he remained aloof.9

The agreement was Roosevelt’s idea, designed to ensure that the United States had some control over whatever remnant of the British fleet might end up in Halifax (the only Empire port beside Tricomalee, Ceylon that could handle such warships) in the event Britain was conquered by the Germans. In retrospect that seems profoundly pessimistic, but it is the same assessment Churchill made after the collapse of French and Belgian defenses in spring 1940. “He who fights and runs away, lives to fight another day.” Churchill was, quite sensibly, less concerned with “hemispheric cooperative defense” than with strengthening Britain’s defenses and maintaining home morale. King’s political maneuvers were less worrisome than Roosevelt’s “reluctant bride” approach. Yet, in July 1940, the Canadian Institute of International Affairs concluded that hemispheric cooperative defense planning was the safest way for Canada to preserve its national identity.10

Roosevelt’s concern for safe disposition of the British fleet was genuine. Even for the air-minded President, the Atlantic provided an irreplaceable defensive perimeter for the east coasts of the U.S. and Canada, provided they commanded the seas. >>

“For most of Canada’s history, fear of U.S. power pushed Canada and Great Britain together. But in 1940, Britain’s weakness ‘obliged Canada to seek shelter in the American embrace.’ Mackenzie King understood that ‘if Canada was to help Britain, the United States had to defend Canada.’” —J.L. Granatstein

King and FDR, Ogdensburg, 1940

offered his car; King (a small statement of independence?) chose to drive down himself with the U.S. Ambassador as co-pilot. The negotiations with Churchill over the now-famous destroyers-for-bases arrangement were sputtering. When King argued that Canada, which had committed to building military facilities on the island of Newfoundland, should be involved in the defense of Britain, FDR revealed what Granatstein pointedly described as “a Rooseveltian fist draped in the velvet of warmest good fellowship.” The President said “he had mostly in mind” the defense of Canada. Then, switching gears, he expressed bewilderment that the British were dragging their feet over U.S. access to facilities in the British West Indies. If necessary America would simply take those bases, Roosevelt went on, but “it was much better to have a friendly agreement in advance.”

The Ogdensburg Agreement, providing for a Permanent Joint Canadian-American Defense Board (the PJDB, which still exists), was agreed upon that evening and announced to the public in a press release written by FDR. It was neither a treaty nor a formal agreement. Canada treated it as an order-in-council; Roosevelt handled it as an executive agreement that did not require approval by the Senate. Containing no machinery or details, it was pretty much a verbal handshake (to mix images). Official and bureaucratic goodwill and cooperation, from that day to this, has made the PJDB work.8 It had overwhelming popular support in both countries though a few of King’s conservative opponents angrily accused him of giving the United States control over Canada’s military and of deserting Britain.

Churchill and the British agreed, though less loudly. Lord Cranborne, the Dominions Office Secretary, complained that Ogdensburg was a defensive alliance between the United States and a British Dominion, made without consultation with London. He wanted Churchill to say just that to both parties. Churchill demurred. “All these transactions,” he said, “will be judged in a mood different to that prevailing while the issue still hangs in the balance.” Aware that American support was far more valuable than pride, he remained aloof.9

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“Fearful Colonials” or Smart Ones?

The urgent and sometimes testy byplay between Churchill and Roosevelt over the British fleet was part and parcel of the destroyers-for-bases arrangement in late August 1940. Churchill tried to force the United States to drop its neutrality as the price for guaranteeing that the fleet would sail west if the worst happened. Roosevelt insisted on such guarantees as a precondition to American aid. Mackenzie King tried to uncouple neutrality and the British fleet, imploring Churchill to think about the possibility of a British defeat—to no avail.

Finally the swap took place: fifty over-age U.S. destroyers for the right to build naval and/or air bases, with 99-year rent-free leases, on six British possessions in the Caribbean, plus Bermuda; and—most crucially—Newfoundland, then a Dominion separate from Canada. (In a bit of semantic posturing, bases in Newfoundland and Bermuda were given “freely” to the United States, not as part of the destroyers-for-bases deal.)

British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden labeled the swap “a grievous blow to our authority and ultimately to our sovereignty.” His boss, with a better sense of what mattered, later observed: “The effects in Europe were profound.”

Perhaps there are no single turning points in history, but there are *sine qua nons*—things without which something very different likely would have happened. Surely the Ogdensburg agreement fits that description. Historians view the destroyers-for-bases deal as a pivotal point in the process by which the United States entered the war. But for Roosevelt, assurances that the Royal Navy would be sent to safe harbors in the event of a successful invasion of Britain were clearly a *sine qua non* for any arrangement.

Ogdensburg gave Roosevelt what he believed he needed should the British Isles collapse—control over the greatest fleet in the world. Canada would be the fleet’s host, but, as the President told Mackenzie King, “It was much better…to have a friendly agreement in advance.” With Nazi Germany astride all of western Europe, Canada’s security depended on the United States, which meant the Americans would control the British fleet. Without Ogdensburg, the Americans might well have stalled and moved slowly toward a defensive mode.

The Rest of the War

That provides a gloss of the formative first two years of Anglo-Canadian-American wartime relations. But from Pearl Harbor, there were three and one-half years of war to go. That period is, for Canada, best characterized by what Churchill told Mackenzie King after the second Quebec conference in September 1944: “you have been so fine about letting England lead, not making it difficult for us by insisting always on several having direction.” King, gently correcting, replied that he “thought it much better before the world to leave the matter of leadership in the hands of the President and Churchill.” In other words, deter-
mining grand political and military strategy was left to London and Washington, and, of course, Moscow. Not Ottawa!

The Canadian military contributed heroically to fighting the war: Canadian corvettes and destroyers in the Bay of Biscay after D-Day; a Canadian beachhead at Normandy; the campaigns in Italy are just three examples. Canadian casualty rates were high. But perhaps a few comments and quotations will better explain “not Ottawa” as it related to grand strategy and the politics of war.

Except perhaps in British Columbia, Canadians were not focused on the Pacific War. Prime Minister King restricted participation to the North Pacific, despite pressure from the Royal Navy and Churchill to reassert British influence in all of the western Pacific—something the head of the U.S. Navy, Admiral Ernest King, dismissively opposed. There was the joint Canadian-American invasion of unoccupied Kiska Island in the Aleutians, but not much else.16

One strongly-felt Canadian attitude is captured by the historian John English: “By January 1941, American troops had begun to infiltrate [my emphasis] the Crown colony [Newfoundland, officially a Dominion] under the umbrella of Ogdensburg.”17 Of course the destroyers-for-bases deal, which King supported, had given the United States five leased areas on the island plus the naval base at Argentia.

Well…my dictionary defines “infiltrate” as “entering and gaining access surreptitiously and gradually.” Yet Canadians knew right away that American military personnel were moving onto the island. Since the arrival of forces was far from secret, perhaps “had begun to arrive” would be more accurate and less judgmental.

There is no question that Roosevelt and the Americans pushed hard to take advantage of the strategic facilities and locations that the destroyers-for-bases arrangement offered. After all, German U-boats were patrolling the shores of the western Atlantic, and only in hindsight do we know that Hitler’s invasion of the British Isles would be cancelled. Moreover, while American acquisitiveness is legion, none of the leased territory and bases became permanent U.S. possessions.

The reality was that Roosevelt and Churchill insisted on maintaining full control over the strategic direction of the war, and their military chiefs wanted to maintain similar control over theater and tactical matters: hardly surprising, hardly imperialistic, hardly a veiled threat to Canadian independence.

When Canada was excluded from the Atlantic Charter conference aboard warships anchored off Argentina, Newfoundland, King was hurt and angry. But he quickly realized that the UK could not bring in just one of the dominion leaders. Throughout the war, the British and the Americans excluded Canadian participation in strategic meetings, including the two Quebec conferences, on the convenient grounds that if Canada participated, then so should Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, or Brazil, Chile, and Chiang Kai-shek’s feeble regime in China. Whatever the persiflage, whatever the desire to avoid too many players, FDR and Churchill viewed Canada and the other nations united as supporters, not “deciders.”

No Canadian seriously expected or requested representation on the Combined (Anglo-American) Chiefs of Staff which directed wartime planning and strategy. As Mackenzie King put it: “. . . jointly they [the Anglo-Americans] have supreme direction of the war. I have conceded them that position.” Canadians fought and fought well in the Mediterranean and European theaters, but their leaders concerned themselves with tactics, not grand strategy.18

Perhaps the style of Roosevelt’s firm refusal to include King or the Canadian chiefs of staff in any substantive meetings made First Quebec in 1943 “embarrassing to Churchill,” as David Dilks has written. But “the way she was shunted aside in World War II Allied councils” was without doubt a Churchill-Roosevelt agreement, not just an American idea. Twelve years later, King ruefully referred to his role at the meeting as being akin to that of “the General Manager at the Château Frontenac.”19 Yet King’s meetings, however informal, with Field Marshal Alanbrooke (Chief of the Imperial General Staff), at Second Quebec in 1944, suggest that Canada’s leader was brought into the information loop, if not “consulted.”20

Roosevelt’s concerns about too many players was more than just a patronizing attitude. He was curiously focused on fears of renewed expansion of the British Empire and European colonialism—a kind of mental vestigial remain. Yet by the end of the Forties, the United States was promoting and funding continued British control (informal, of >>
“Fearful Colonials” or Smart Ones?

course) over strategic sites deemed necessary in the Cold War. A knowledge of history does not always prepare one for the future.

In September 1942, Mackenzie King (prompted privately by Alanbrooke) advised against sending a Canadian general, Andrew McNaughton, to Moscow to discuss Churchill’s

Endnotes


2. John Alan English, “Not an Equilateral Triangle: Canada’s Strategic Relationship with the United States and Britain, 1939-1945,” in B.J.C. McKercher and Lawrence Aronsen, eds., The North Atlantic Triangle in a Changing World: Anglo-American-Canadian Relations, 1902-1956 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 147-83; quote on 174. I am struck by the tendency of many, though not all, Canadian historians to depend upon British histories for their narratives about U.S. policies. Is this a reflexive withdrawal from what they perceive is the American gravitational pull, or a byproduct of their often British educations—or both?

3. “Canada” in I.C.B. Dear, ed., The Oxford Companion to the Second World War (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 182-83. Paul A.C. Koistinen, Arsenal of World War II: The Political Economy of American Warfare, 1940-1945 (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 498-500, argues persuasively that, despite “impressive” gross figures, by the peak production year of 1944, the United States “was producing munitions at almost exactly the level it should have been” within the context of production capabilities; Canada’s production rate was lower, but higher than any other major belligerent. Of course neither nation was being bombed or invaded.


8. Perras, Roosevelt and the Origins, 76-77; Terry Reardon, Winston Churchill and Mackenzie King: So Similar, So Different (Toronto: Dundurn, 2012), 123-25; English, “Not an Equilateral Triangle,” 163; Middlemiss, “The Road from Hyde Park,” 177, and “Introduction,” Fifty Years of Canada-United States Cooperation, 1-2. Fred Pollock’s “Roosevelt, the Ogdensburg Agreement, and the British Fleet: All Done with Mirrors,” in Diplomatic History 5 (Summer 1981), 203-19, remains the definitive account of FDR’s role in the agreement. The talks, which included Henry Stimson, who had become secretary of war only a month earlier, actually took place on the President’s railroad car heading for the little village of Heuvelton, seven miles southeast of Ogdensburg.


11. Pollock, “The Ogdensburg Agreement,” 211 and passim. FDR casually suggested that George VI could, if necessary, move to Canada, but Secretary of State Cordell Hull warned that isolationists would claim FDR was “establishing a monarchy on the North American Continent.” They settled for Bermuda: ibid., 207. The domestic details on the destroyers-for-bases deal, accurate despite hyperbole about how the arrangement “changed the role of the American presidency,” are in Robert Shogun, Hard Bargain (New York: Scribners, 1995). Churchill’s government could make such commitments for Newfoundland because it was not part of self-governing Canada (unlike Nova Scotia, which FDR would have preferred), but rather a Dominion administered since 1934 by a British-appointed governor and six civil servants, who reported directly to the British government in London (in effect a Crown colony). In
Roosevelt was curiously focused on fears of renewed expansion of the British Empire....Yet by the end of the Forties, the U.S. was promoting and funding continued British control over strategic sites deemed necessary in the Cold War. A knowledge of history does not always prepare one for the future.”

1949, by a close vote, Newfoundland became a province of Canada. Those concerned about the U.S. swallowing Canada should know that when Newfoundland voted, there was another choice: the Economic Union Party (EUP), which proposed closer economic ties with America—but gained fewer votes than did those who preferred the status quo.


14. It has been intriguingly suggested on occasion that King was the linch-pin for the destroyers-bases deal, a plausible conclusion mentioned by Terry Reardon in his Winston Churchill and Mackenzie King. If that were the case, why is there no indication in King’s obsessively complete diaries of his acting as the indispensable connection during those crucial months? Reardon, 139, refers only to the destroyers-for-bases “transaction,” not mentioning King. Nor have researchers found any mention in Canadian or U.S. records of King acting as go-between for Churchill and Roosevelt. Shogun, Hard Bargain, 213-14, states that Churchill had sought King’s help in “lobbying the Americans,” but offers no details. He also states (Hard Bargain, 222, a biography of FDR’s attorney general) that between 22 and 25 August 1940, Roosevelt and Churchill discussed negotiations on the telephone. That is plausible, but not mentioned elsewhere; for example, Kimball, ed., Churchill and Roosevelt, I 57-69.


16. One of the few joint U.S.-Canadian operations came in the Aleutians, some of which had been occupied by the Japanese. On 15 August 1943, a Canadian-American assault force of 35,000 landed on Kiska in the Aleutian chain that wanders out some 1200 miles from southwest Alaska toward the Kamchatka peninsula in Siberia. It was a sad comic opera; the Japanese had left the island three weeks earlier, yet there were 300 casualties from either friendly fire, booby-traps and mines, frostbite and trench foot. Four Canadians and seventeen Americans were killed. That night, Japanese warships, thinking they were engaged by Americans, shelled and attempted to torpedo the tiny nearby islet of Little Kiska and the Japanese soldiers waiting to escape. Admiral Ernest King reported to the secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, that the only things that remained on the islands were dogs and fresh brewed coffee: “The Japanese are very clever. Their dogs can brew coffee.” This story is taken from Wikipedia, 8 October 2012, but see the intriguing study by Galen Roger Perras, Stepping Stones to Nowhere: The Aleutian Islands, Alaska, and American Military Strategy, 1867-1945 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 136-57. Perras offers slightly different casualty figures.


19. Shogun, 3 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), I 57-69; Martin Gilbert makes no mention of Churchill’s being embarrassed in Road to Victory, 1941-1945; nor could I find any mention of it in the usual sources and books, including Reardon, Churchill and Mackenzie King, 245-46. Lord Moran mentions a proposal (from Churchill) that King “take part in the Conference,” but quotes Churchill’s report to his War Cabinet that King and the Canadian government were “delighted” and felt “thoroughly ‘on the map.’” Churchill: Taken from the Diaries of Lord Moran (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966), 117, n.3. FDR rejected advice from his military chiefs of staff that the Canadian prime minister attend the conference sessions without his own military chiefs; Kimball, ed., Churchill & Roosevelt, II 343.


22. Allenbrooke in War Diaries, 191, 323-24, 432. For a full discussion of Churchill’s efforts to manipulate McNaughton in the hope of gaining support for “the liberation of northern Norway,” see Reardon, Winston Churchill and Mackenzie King, 221-24.
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. When did Churchill broadcast: “Finally the whole world was combined against the evil-doers....”? (W)
2. Which French leader did Churchill refer to as “pea-tayne”? (C)
3. Who in 1941 sent WSC a cigar box engraved with the Cross of Lorraine, eliciting the response: “H’m, double cross of Lorraine, h’m, very interesting”? (C)
4. On 10 May 1940, how did Churchill reply when Chamberlain asked him: “why in these days a Peer should not be Prime Minister”? (P)
5. At Chartwell in the 1930s WSC sometimes showed visitors his study. “This is my factory...to think I once showed visitors his study.” (C)
6. “Ah! foolish-diligent Germans, working so hard, thinking so deeply, marching and counter-marching on the parade grounds of the Fatherland, poring over long calculations, fuming in new-found prosperity, discontented amid the splendour of mundane success, how many bulwarks to your peace and glory did you not, with your own hands, successively tear down!” In which Churchill book does this appear? (L)

LEVEL 3
7. Who wrote on 10 May 1940: Churchill “is a man without a party...He was a man, take him for all in all, I mustn’t mind him. We’re all toads beneath the harrow, you know”? (L)
8. To whom did Churchill write on 4 November 1954: “I see that after all these years you still believe me to be a glow-worm. That is a compliment which I find entirely acceptable.” (P)
9. Whom was WSC quoting when he said: “Being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of being drowned”? (M)
10. Which American President, in London, quoted Churchill on John Foster Dulles: “He is the only case I know of a bull who carries his china shop with him”? (M)

LEVEL 2
11. On which birthday was WSC given a cake with Shakespeare’s lines, “He was a man, take him for all in all, I shall not look upon his like again”? (P)
12. What were Churchill’s four climacteries during the Second World War? (W)

LEVEL 1
13. Whom was Churchill quoting to secretary Elizabeth Nel during the war: “You mustn’t mind me. We’re all toads beneath the harrow, you know”? (L)
14. Name the postwar Australian Prime Minister whose second Christian name was “Winston” after WSC. (C)
15. Give the month and year of Churchill’s last visit to America. (P)
16. Name the American with whom WSC enjoyed the longest friendship. (P)
17. Which four words are engraved on Churchill’s statue in Paris? (S)
18. In what month and year did Churchill launch the “V for Victory” campaign? (W)

Answers
1. (1) V-E Day broadcast, 8 May 1945. (2) Marshal Pétain, “that antique defeatist,” head of the French Vichy government. (3) Charles de Gaulle. (4) Sensing a trap in the question, Churchill gave no reply. He told a reporter he regarded America’s entry into the war as a fifth climacteric.
3. (7) Edward R. Murrow. (8) Violet Bonham Carter. As Violet Asquith she first met WSC in 1906, when she recounted on his eightieth birthday, 30 November 1941: “He was a man, take him for all in all, I mustn’t mind him. We’re all toads beneath the harrow, you know.”
4. (9) Samuel Johnson: “No man will be a sailor who has contrivance enough to get himself into a jail; for being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of being drowned.”
5. (10) Ronald Reagan.
7. (21) The Tory leader Andrew Bonar Law. (22) John McClelland of Toronto, who met Churchill during a visit to England in 1939. A contract was signed with McClelland & Stewart during this first meeting.
8. (23) Major Ion Calvocoressi. After the war, as High Sheriff of Kent, he played a leading part in the reconstruction of the town of Westerham. (24) At the end of his speech on the 25th anniversary of VE Day, 20 July 1941: “This is my factory...to think I once showed visitors his study.”
THE CHURCHILL CENTRE AFFILIATE ORGANIZATIONS

Please send updates to this list to rlangworth@winstonchurchill.org

THE CHURCHILL CENTRE AUSTRALIA
John David Olsen, Representative
Tel. 401-92-7878
Email jolsen@churchillcentre.org.au

INTL. CHURCHILL SOCIETY, CANADA
Randy Barber, Chairman
Tel. (905) 201-6687
Email randybarber@sympatico.ca

INDEPENDENT SOCIETIES

AB-CALGARY: Rt Hon Sir Winston Spencer Churchill Society of Calgary
Steven T. Robertson • Tel. (403) 298-3438
Email robertsons@bennettjones.ca

AB-EDMONTON: Rt Hon Sir Winston Spencer Churchill Society of Edmonton
Dr. Roger Hodkinson • Tel. (780) 433-1191
Email rogerhodkinson@shawbiz.ca

BC-VANCOUVER: Rt Hon Sir Winston Spencer Churchill Society of British Columbia
April Accola • Tel. (778) 321-3550
Email aprilaccola@hotmail.com

BC-VICTORIA: Sir Winston Churchill Society of Vancouver Island • www.churchillvictoria.com
Paul Summerville
Email presidentvianslandchurchhallsociety@shaw.ca

ON-OTTAWA: Sir Winston Churchill Society of Ottawa • www.ottawachurchillsociety.com
Ronald I. Cohen • Tel. (613) 692-6234
Email churchillsociety@chartwellcomm.com

ON-TORONTO: Churchill Society for the Advancement of Parliamentary Democracy
www.churchillsociety.org
Robert A. O’Brien • Tel. (416) 977-0956
Email ro’brien@couttscrane.com

THE CHURCHILL CENTRE NEW ZEALAND
Mike Groves, Representative
Tel. (9) 537-6591
Email mike.groves@xtra.co.nz

THE CHURCHILL CENTRE UNITED KINGDOM
Allen Packwood, Executive Director
Tel. (01213) 336175
Email allen.packwood@chu.cam.ac.uk

ESSEX: TCC-UK Woodford / Epping Branch
Tony Woodhead • Tel. (0208) 508-4562
Email anthony.woodhead@virginmedia.com

KENT: TCC-UK Chartwell Branch
Nigel Guest • Tel. (01603) 870306
Email chartwelltccuk@virginmedia.com

N. YORKSHIRE: TCC-UK Northern Branch
Derek Greenwell • Tel. (01423) 863225
Email dg@ftcg.co.uk

N. WALES: The Churchill Club of Conwy
Barbara Higgins • Tel. (01492) 535311
Email higginsrbm@aol.com

THE CHURCHILL CENTRE UNITED STATES
Lee Pollock, Executive Director
Tel. (888) WSC-1874
Email lpollock@winstonchurchill.org

AK: Rt Hon Sir Winston Spencer Churchill Society of Alaska
Judith & James Muller • Tel. (907) 786-4740
Email jwmuller@uaa.alaska.edu

CA-BAY AREA: Churchillians-by-the-Bay
Gregory B. Smith • Email gbslist@comcast.net

CA-LOS ANGELES: Churchills of So. Calif.
Leon Waszak • Tel. (818) 240-1000 x5844
Email leonwaszak@aol.com

CO: Rocky Mountain Churchillians
Lew House • Tel. (303) 661-9856
Email Lhouse2cti@earthlink.net

CT: Churchill Society of Connecticut
Roger Deakin • Tel. (860) 767-2817
Email khouchin@sbglobal.net

DC: Washington Society for Churchill Robert Rosenblatt • Tel. (703) 688-9647
Email bobrosenblatt7@gmail.com

FL-NORTH: Churchill Centre North Florida
Richard Streiff • Tel. (352) 378-8885
Email streiff@bellsouth.net

FL-SOUTH: Churchill Society of South Florida
Rodolfo Milani • Tel. (305) 668-4419
Email churchillsocietyofsouthflorida@gmail.com

GA: Winston Churchill Society of Georgia
www.georgiachurchill.org
Joseph Wilson • Tel. (404) 966-1408
Email joewilson68@hotmail.com

IL: Churchill Centre Chicagoland
Phil & Susan Larson • Tel. (708) 352-6825
Email parker-fox@msn.com

LA: Churchill Society of New Orleans
J. Gregg Collins • Tel. (504) 799-3484
Email jgreggcollins@msn.com

MI: Winston Churchill Society of Michigan
Richard Marsh • Tel. (734) 913-0848
Email rcmarsha2@aol.com

NE: Churchill Round Table of Nebraska
John Meeks • Tel. (402) 968-2773
Email jmeeks@wrdhsntry.com

NEW ENGLAND: New England Churchillians
Joseph L. Hern • Tel. (617) 773-1907
Email jhern@jhernlaw.com

NJ: New Jersey Churchillians
Daniel McKillop • Tel. (973) 978-3268
Email mckillop13@gmail.com

NY: New York Churchillians
Gregg Berman • Tel. (212) 751-3389
Email Gregg.Berman@tklaw.com

NC: North Carolina Churchillians
www.churchillsocietyofnorthcarolina.org
Craig Horn • Tel. (704) 844-9980
Email dcraighorn@carolina.rr.com

OH: Churchill Centre Northern Ohio
Michael McMenamin • Tel. (216) 781-1212
Email mmcm@walterhav.com

OR: Churchill Society of Portland
William D. Schaub • Tel. (503) 548-2509
Email schaubw@aol.com

PA: Churchill Society of Philadelphia
Earl M. Baker • Tel. (610) 647-6973
Email earlbaker@idv.net

SC: Bernard Baruch Chapter
Kenneth Childs • Tel. (803) 254-4035
Email kchilds@childshalligan.net

TX-DALLAS: Emery Reves Churchillians
Jeff Weesner • Tel. (940) 321-0757
Email jweesner@centurytel.net

TX-HOUSTON: Churchill Centre Houston
Chris Schaeper • Tel. (713) 660-6898
Email chrisschaeper@sbcglobal.net

TX-SAN ANTONIO: Churchill Centre South Texas
www.thechurchillcentresouthtexas.com
Don Jakeway • Tel. (210) 333-2085
Email churchillstx@gmail.com

WA: Churchill Centre Seattle
www.churchillseattle.blogspot.com
Simon Mould • Tel. (425) 286-7364
Email simon@cccirkland.org
Widely admired for its brilliant use of light and color, “The Cathedral, Hackwood Park,” was sold as lot #379 at a Christie’s London auction on November 20th, 2013. The seller was the Estate of Valerie Eliot, widow of T.S. Eliot. The selling price including buyer’s premium was £362,500 ($584,350).

The provenance is impressive, extending beyond T.S. Eliot. Churchill painted this arboreal scene at Hackwood House, Hampshire, the home of his friend Lord Camrose after 1935. The house was earlier leased by Lord Curzon. Camrose, owner of The Daily Telegraph and a good friend of the Churchills, led the postwar drive to raise the money to purchase and endow Chartwell, so the Churchills could live out their lives there, whence it passed to the National Trust.

“The Cathedral, Hackwood Park” was a gift from Churchill to Camrose, and remained in that family until sold by the estate of the Second Viscount Camrose at Christie’s in June 1999. Valerie Eliot, the purchaser, spent £41,100 including buyer’s premium, equivalent to $68,340 at the time.

Valerie had been T.S. Eliot’s secretary and was much younger than the famous poet and author. They were married in 1956 and he died in 1965. The 2013 auction consisted of her art treasures, with the proceeds to benefit one of her charities, and was highlighted by an amazing collection of portrait miniatures. The auction grossed more than six million pounds.

This auction was just another example of the frothy market in collectibles. I participated without success in the Churchill/Forbes Christie’s auction in New York on December 6th. In light of my article, “Churchill and Flandin” (FH 157), I was most interested in a 1947 letter from Churchill to Ava, Lady Anderson, with an inscribed copy of The Gathering Storm. They went for $14,625, including buyer’s premium.

Another recent auction saw a copy of the Bay Psalms, the first book printed in British North America, sell for a reported $14.2 million. The purchaser was David Rubenstein, a co-founder of the Carlyle hedge fund, presumably with wealth created by our “irrationally exuberant” stock market.

Mr. Marsh is director of the Winston Churchill Society of Michigan
Image by kind courtesy of Churchill Heritage Ltd.