70th Anniversary of V-E Day

Winston Churchill and George Marshall: Noblest Romans | Ministers of War Reviewed

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The Churchill Centre was founded in 1968 to inspire leadership, statesmanship, vision and courage through the thoughts, words, works and deeds of Winston Spencer Churchill. The Churchill Centre sponsors international and national conferences and promotes republication of Churchill’s long out-of-print books. Editors and staff of the Centre’s website answer email research queries from students and scholars worldwide, guiding them to sources they need in their quest for knowledge of Winston Churchill’s life and times.
Our cover artist is twelve-year-old Grant Agamalian, who created this design to commemorate Winston Churchill and the end of the Second World War. See story pp. 26–27.
Seventieth anniversaries are necessarily the last milestone anniversaries at which a good number of participants still survive. Accordingly, in this issue we celebrate V-E Day Seventy Years On while members of the Greatest Generation are still with us to share their memories and receive our gratitude.

Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper sets the tone of this issue with a letter written specifically for The Churchill Centre. He reminds us that preserving the principles Churchill defended required an Allied effort.

Jonathan Schneer shows us how Churchill handled his Cabinet and kept this “team of rivals” together. Anne Henderson provides a similar view of another prime minister, Robert Menzies, and how the Australian leader had to maneuver between his own government and Churchill’s in London.

On the military side Raymond Callahan explains how Churchill managed the Empire’s armies, while Paul Courtenay provides a quick guide to the honors the leaders of these forces received. Mark Stoler examines the most important military relationship Churchill had with an officer whom he had no control, General George C. Marshall, and Paul Taylor compares Churchill with the mercurial General Patton.

In our autumn 2014 issue, FH 165, we provided a host of tributes to our beloved Sir Martin Gilbert, which his wife Esther was able to share with him before he passed away in February of this year. Therefore, we run our final tribute to the “historian of the century” with Sir Martin’s own account of his astonishingly productive life.

Even as we acknowledge the passing of one generation, we celebrate the arrival of another. Our cover artist this issue is twelve-year-old Grant Agamalian. His story can be found in our center spread. And opposite we are pleased to print a letter from another budding young Churchill Scholar.

The success of the 2014 film The Imitation Game about the Bletchley code breakers has stirred up a new sort of Churchill myth that Jonathan Schilling has investigated and found wanting.

Finally, in this year of major anniversaries (50 since Churchill’s death, 70 since the end of the war, 75 since Churchill became Prime Minister, 100 since the Dardanelles) books about Churchill continue to proliferate in all languages. From time to time it becomes necessary for this journal to catch up with this profusion of information and dedicate a disproportional amount of space to reviews. In this issue we look at fifteen books, but our summer and autumn issues still promise to be full with even more reviews.

David Freeman, April 2015
**LETTERS**

*Email: info@winstonchurchill.org*  
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**Tonypandy Redux**

LONDON—Jeremy Paxman was wrong entirely, when he alleged in his BBC documentary of 30 January 2015 *Churchill: The Nation’s Farewell* [reviewed *FH* 167] that in 1911 Winston Churchill sent troops in to attack the miners at Tonypandy during a strike in Wales.

Randolph Churchill documented very clearly in the second volume of the Official Biography of his father that it was Churchill as Home Secretary who intervened to send police instead of troops to help bring order. [See Leading Churchill Myths in *FH* 140.] It is quite clear that at no time did Churchill authorize military intervention and there was no “shooting of striking miners” at Tonypandy.

—Celia Lee

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**Victory Through Education**

QUISPAMSIS, N.B.—My name is Riley Mitchell, and I am 10 years old. In my grade 4 English class, each person had to do a project which could be done on anything or any person. I love history and learning about the World Wars so after some research I picked Winston Churchill.

I chose Winston Churchill because he saved the world. His AMAZING speeches inspired his country and other countries to stand and fight against the Nazis. In my opinion he was the most amazing guy to live! And I bet he is doing just fine in heaven.

While preparing for my presentation I went to many different web sites and watched many different videos and I found yours to be the best. Thank you for all your juicy information. You are doing a terrific job of keeping the story of Winston Churchill alive. It was cool learning about a real world SUPER HERO!

—Riley Mitchell

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**Few Indeed**

IPSWICH—My father was a well-known Battle of Britain pilot. He worshipped Churchill, as do I. Of all the Prime Minister’s great speeches the one that touches me most is the tribute to the RAF pilots, “Never in the field of human conflict . . .”

Recently, a Radio 4 narrator said that this was a formula of words Churchill had used for years and that his private secretary, Eddie Marsh, kept a phrasebook of his master’s utterances. This is not only somewhat prosaic but (if true) takes the shine off what I had always considered to be a unique, albeit not extemporised, speech. Can you shed any light on this?

—Stephen Llewellyn

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The Churchill Centre’s response:

The famous line did in fact have a long gestation, as indeed did a number of Churchill’s other striking phrases. We do not think, though, that this in any way diminishes the tribute that Churchill was paying to your father and the other pilots. The fact that he polished many phrases in advance before synchronizing them with key moments in history illustrates Churchill’s dedication to—and the seriousness of—his oratory, which he knew to be his most potent weapon as a national leader.

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**Errata**

In his haste to get out the special issue of *Finest Hour* 167, the editor inadvertently omitted to update the issue number at the bottom of pages 3–21. More egregiously, he left the speech by British Prime Minister David Cameron out of the Table of Contents. At least he remembered to include the speech itself on page six. Accordingly, the editor has sent himself to Coventry, calling at all stations, including Leighton Buzzard, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, Long Buckby, and Rugby.

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**Quotation of the Season**

“In all our long history we have never seen a greater day than this.”  
—WSC, Victory in Europe Day, 8 May 1945

**Mr. Llewellyn replies:**

The more I have thought about this issue and the points you make, the more I realise that OF COURSE he would use a particularly elegant phrase a number of times, honing it, polishing it—and just waiting for the perfect moment to utilise it to its greatest effect. Good heavens, is not musical history filled with composers doing the very same thing? Rossini used the same aria in two different operas, sung by a tenor in one and a soprano in the other (with different words of course). Brahms, Beethoven, Bach—they all cannibalised their own material, not to mention stealing other people’s!

So my original whine was, upon reflection, completely misplaced. In my defence all I can say is that never in the field of human writing....
Quote from the Prime Minister (Finest Hours)

It is to humanity’s lasting benefit that Sir Winston Churchill stood so firmly for the principles he loved: Freedom, democracy and justice.

In his century’s darkest hour, he inspired courage and resolve not just among his own countrymen, but in the people of all nations, including my own.

His address in 1941 to Canada’s Parliament is as stirring today as it was then: “Whatever the cost, whatever the suffering, we shall stand by one another, true and faithful comrades, and do our duty, God helping us, to the end.”

In many ways we live in a world he made, and are the better for it.

Those principles Churchill championed are fragile even today. And we honour his legacy every time we stand, either alone or alongside allies, to protect and preserve them.

Prime Minister of Canada
MINISTERS AT WAR
BY JONATHAN SCHNEER

Winston Churchill formed his War Cabinet in May 1940. To begin with, it had five members, including himself. Over the course of the war he enlarged it to suit circumstances, but never to more than eight members at one time. Only two members remained constant: Churchill himself and Labour Party leader Clement Attlee. Three others served for most of the war: Anthony Eden, a Conservative; the great trade unionist Ernest Bevin; and a non-party man with Conservative inclinations, Sir John Anderson. Herbert Morrison, a Labour man, served for nearly three years. Others who served for shorter periods included most notably the former Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, and also Lord Halifax, Lord Beaverbrook, and Sir Stafford Cripps.

Led by Winston Churchill, these men, and some others, steered Britain through the greatest crisis in her modern history. Churchill’s War Cabinet has been deservedly celebrated ever since. But the story is more complicated than is often thought. Obviously the War Cabinet warred against the Nazis, but its members sometimes warred against each other. This has been mentioned by historians but generally downplayed. I hope to give it proper emphasis.

Churchill’s War Cabinet saved Britain and helped save the world from Nazi horror. But the War Cabinet was not a smooth functioning machine. Its members were hard men with great talent and capacity for work, also with great ambitions and great egos. Often they clashed. Moreover, if today we cannot imagine Britain during the Second World War without Churchill as Prime Minister, people could imagine it then.

Team of Rivals

Churchill’s team included men whose politics conflicted starkly. Labour believed in nationalizing the means of production, distribution and exchange. British Conservatives believed Government should, usually, keep hands off the economy. Churchill himself was instinctively a man of the right. Yet he was determined to keep his disparate team together. By and large he did.

Britain and her Empire stood alone against the Nazis from June 1940, when France surrendered, until June 1941, when Germany invaded Russia. During that period War Cabinet Ministers largely suppressed their differences. They began to argue, however, once Russia and American entered the fray and Britain seemed unlikely to lose the war. Then jealousies, enmities, and strains, always present but usually papered over, grew apparent. Ideological conflict grew fierce. Churchill strove to contain it. In 1945 Labour pulled out of his Coalition anyway. Churchill called a General Election as soon as Germany surrendered, with the war against Japan still raging. It proved to be one of the worst-tempered elections of twentieth-century British history, as long pent-up frustrations finally burst.

Until then, however, the men of the War Cabinet had sat around a table every Monday afternoon at 5:30, and every Wednesday and Thursday at noon, hammering out policy on the most pressing issues raised by the war. If necessary they met more than three times a week, even three times a day. Sometimes they debated matters of life and death. Reading the minutes of those meetings reveals a War Cabinet of confident men absolutely focused on saving the country.

Yet there were always divisions within the group, even aside from the ideological ones. Conservative Ministers were all more or less wealthy; some were aristocratic. Labour Ministers came from mixed backgrounds: Attlee was middle class; Cripps the son of a lord; Morrison the son of a south London policeman; Bevin the illegitimate son of a charwoman and the only War Cabinet member to have worked as a manual laborer. Occasionally one perceives class-consciousness dividing the group. Here is Anthony Eden recalling Morrison in Cabinet: “He was a good rifleman. The kind of man you promote to lance corporal one week and he may lose his stripes the next, but he will be back up again soon. Cockneys make the best soldiers.”

Churchill had assembled a “Team of Rivals,” as Doris Kearns Goodwin termed Abraham Lincoln’s Cabinet during the American Civil War. Churchill’s men were constantly carping, backbiting, maneuvering for position. Lord Beaverbrook employed flattery. During one Cabinet meeting he passed a note to First Lord of the Admiralty A.V. Alexander, a Labourite: “I will do all I can to help you. I believe you will do the job better than anybody else.” He wrote insinuatingly to Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour: “Can we make a platform for you where I can stand at your side? I am sure you can do so if you determine to build it.” With Churchill, he laid on the flattery with a trowel: “I send this letter of gratitude and devotion to the leader of the nation, the savior of our people and the symbol of resistance in the free world.” Churchill enjoyed but never trusted Beaverbrook. By the time the war finished practically nobody did. In 1945 Attlee cautioned newly elected Labour Members: “I warn you that...
if you talk to him no good will come of it. Beware of flattery.”

Perhaps any group of strong individuals will jockey for position. But the intensity of discord and dislike within a War Cabinet celebrated for the opposite is striking. Beaverbrook despised Attlee, who returned the favor. In the end he rowed so bitterly with Bevin that the latter threatened to sue him. He dismissed the imposing John Anderson as “Il Pomposo.” He called the religious Halifax “a sort of Jesus in long boots.” This sort of thing was not limited to Beaverbrook. Everyone made fun of the deputy leader of the Labour Party, Arthur Greenwood, who had a drinking problem. Eden disdained Kingsley Wood, Chancellor of the Exchequer. “The little man will not be missed,” he wrote, after Wood died suddenly. Bevin detested Morrison. At the War Cabinet, Eden sat between the two. He found it “rather uncomfortable,” because whenever Morrison spoke Bevin provided a *sotto voce* accompaniment of jibes and taunts.

**Riding Herd**

How did Churchill keep his ill-assorted team in good temper? He could be solicitous. “I was sorry to see that you looked very tired the other night at the Cabinet....I hope you will not hesitate to take a...well-earned holiday,” he wrote to a Cabinet Minister recently recovered from the flu. He could be encouraging. “Your speech was magnificent. Most vigorous & giving sense of strength & resource,” he wrote another time. When members of the team disagreed, he worked to conciliate them. Once Anthony Eden declared he would not attend a celebration of the anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution: “it is promoted under Communist influence.” “But in Russia that is comparable to the King’s Birthday,” argued Stafford Cripps, who had recently returned from a stint as Britain’s ambassador to Russia. “You mean the Czar’s Deathday,” snapped Herbert Morrison. Churchill intervened calmly: “Why not have a meeting sometime in November (no specific Russian date) to celebrate the Russian resistance?” With this compromise the meeting concluded.

When Churchill thought a colleague was barking up the wrong tree he could use humor to change his mind. In July 1940 the Minister of Food, Lord Woolton, recommended that Britons follow a more balanced diet. Churchill wrote him: “Almost all the food faddists I have ever known, nut eaters and the like, have died young after a long period of senile decay....The way to lose the war is to try to force the British public into a diet of milk, oatmeal, potatoes, etc., washed down on gala occasions with a little lime juice.”

Sometimes Churchill backed down. For example, in June 1942 the Nazis slaughtered 1,300 innocent Czech civilians and burned to the ground two villages in reprisal for the assassination of a leading Nazi, Reinhard Heydrich. The War Cabinet met to discuss a response. Churchill advocated using the next moonlit night to “wipe out” three German villages. Bevin agreed: “Germany responds to brute force & nothing else.” Even more bloodthirsty, the Secretary of State for India, Leo Amery, advocated bombing highly populated towns. Then Attlee introduced a moral consideration: “Doubt if it is useful to enter into competition in frightfulness with Germans.” Morrison supported him: if the RAF purposefully bombed German civilians a cycle of frightfulness would ensue; then “Public w[ould]d say ‘why did you draw this down onto us?’” The Secretary of State for Air, Archibald Sinclair, introduced a practical consideration. Bombing civilians would represent a “Diversion of effort fr[om] military objective.” Anderson agreed: “It costs us something & them nothing,” meaning that if Britain bombed defenseless places she would lose an opportunity to bomb important military objectives. Anthony Eden too opposed the action: “waste of a moonlight night. Bigger diversion than I had thought.” So it was three for bombing German civilians, five opposed. Churchill argued, “My instinct is all the other way,” but “I submit (unwillingly) to the view of Cabinet against.”
The Trouble with Winston

S o a solicitous, supportive, humorous, and democratic Prime Minister kept his fractious War Cabinet on an even keel. It sounds too good to be true, and often it was. He could act the tyrant in Cabinet: like “a rogue elephant,” wrote one colleague. He loved the sound of his own voice. “Cabinet in evening when Winston spoke to us at tremendous length of all aspects of military situation,” Eden complained in his diary. He was a poor chairman, rarely reading notes prepared for him prior to War Cabinet meetings. Attlee took him up on this, and on his tendency to pontificate. “Often half an hour or more is wasted explaining what could have been grasped by two or three minutes reading of the document. Not infrequently a phrase catches your eye which gives rise to a disquisition on an interesting point only slightly connected with the subject matter. The result is a poor chairman, rarely reading notes prepared for him prior to War Cabinet meetings. Attlee took him up on this, and on his tendency to pontificate. “Often half an hour or more is wasted explaining what could have been grasped by two or three minutes reading of the document. Not infrequently a phrase catches your eye which gives rise to a disquisition on an interesting point only slightly connected with the subject matter. The result is long delays and unnecessarily long Cabinets.” And none of Churchill’s colleagues were shrinking violets. “I think you will wish to withdraw your minute. I do not accept any of the findings in the third paragraph,” Alexander replied: “A friendly critic or a critical friend.” Churchill wrote him. “He’s a bully and it’s necessary to deal brutally with him,” Woolton recorded in his diary.

It is not surprising, then, that some of his colleagues concluded they could run the War Cabinet better than he. Eden, whom Churchill designated his heir apparent in the autumn of 1942, dreamt of the succession—but loyally refrained from undermining the Prime Minister during the war. Woolton toyed with the idea of mounting a challenge to Churchill, but never took action. Lord Beaverbrook seriously considered overthrowing Churchill. He took preliminary steps, but never a decisive one. Stafford Cripps came closest to mounting a direct attempt at overthrow. Churchill faced and beat it.

The Iceman Cometh

Stafford Cripps had a mind like a calculating machine, astonishing capacity for work and organization, the ability to inspire devotion among his followers, and deep love of his country. Labour party leaders feared him because he was both effective and extremely left-wing. Before the war he had advocated a Popular Front including Communists as well as Liberals and Conservatives to confront fascism. The Labour Party leaders would have nothing to do with Communists. When Cripps would not back down, they expelled him.

Cripps was personally peculiar. He stuck to a vegetarian diet for health reasons—but also because he disapproved of gluttony. He was a militant Christian socialist. For many reasons he did not appeal to Churchill, but the Prime Minister recognized his abilities and his patriotism. When the war began he sent Cripps to Russia as British ambassador. Soon, however, Cripps wanted to return home, where he thought he could make a greater contribution to the war effort.

Germany invaded Russia in June 1941. No one imagined the Soviets could stand up to a Blitzkrieg, but they did. In Britain people felt immense gratitude, and the left-wing Cripps reaped the benefit. “Someday Sir Stafford will return from Moscow,” wrote one journalist. “He will have a great following. His sense of power, never modest, will be developed fully. He will be dressed up in the garb of leadership—and he will find somewhere to go.”

Cripps returned to Britain in January 1942. Churchill had to prick his bubble. He invited him to lunch. “Well Stafford, how have you returned? Friend or foe?” Cripps replied: “A friendly critic or a critical friend.” Churchill offered him a post in the Cabinet—but not in the War Cabinet. Cripps turned it down as beneath his dignity and ability. Then he gave a press conference about Russia so interesting that “the journalists almost forgot to take notes.” He gave an address on the BBC about the Russians heroically coping with horrific conditions. A well-informed and well-connected listener wrote afterwards: “The trouble in the past has been that there has been no one to replace Winston. Now Cripps is the man.”

Cripps’s popularity soared. Simultaneously, Churchill’s momentarily faltered—for at this moment came news of the fall of Singapore, where the Japanese captured 130,000 British and imperial British soldiers. That night Woolton wrote in his diary that Churchill was “heading for a downfall.” The chairman of the parliamentary Conservative party caucus, the 1922 Committee, approached him. “They are wondering how long Churchill will last,” Woolton wrote. The chairman “came to see whether I had any views about succeeding him. The Party wouldn’t mind having me if I would take it on…” Churchill moved swiftly during this crisis. He fired the remaining prewar advocates of appeasement. He dumped dead wood from his government, regardless of party. He knew he must recognize Cripps and did so in a brilliant way. He appeared to concede ground, bringing him into the War Cabinet after all, appointing him Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House. It was enough to stop Cripps attempting a coup. But Churchill offered Cripps a poisoned chalice—only Cripps did not recognize it.

“I submit (unwillingly) to the view of the Cabinet against.”
—Winston Churchill
Goody, Stafford Cripps

The Leader of the House interprets Government policy to House Members and House opinion to the Government. But Cripps then belonged to no party, so he had no natural claque of men who would automatically support him. He was entirely unsuited for the job Churchill had given him.

In his first speech to the House as its leader, Cripps condemned dog racing, horse racing, and boxing matches; also “personal extravagance together with every other form of wastage small or large.” Everyone knew he was a Puritan, so no one accused him of hypocrisy. But Herbert Morrison, who knew what his Cockney constituents loved, told Cripps he was politically tone deaf. The Conservative party Chief Whip said he was “amazed” by Cripps’s speech. A Liberal fixer said: “if he goes on this way he will not be popular for very long.” Cripps had managed to alienate leaders of all three parties—on day one.26

The air had begun leaking from Cripps’s balloon. It all rushed out some months later. The Government had arranged a two-day debate on India. MPs began leaving the Chamber at lunchtime, even though the Prime Minister was speaking. Cripps was appalled: “I do not think that we can conduct our proceedings here with the dignity and the weight with which we should conduct them unless Members are prepared to pay greater attention to their duties.” The House rose up to defend its honor. Conservatives, Liberals, Labourites peppered him with hostile questions.27 At the War Cabinet the next day Churchill took Cripps to task.

Churchill: Why encourage criticism?
Cripps: Didn’t. Regretted lost opportunity [for House Members] to express support [of India policy].
Churchill: Silent support is perhaps best. House of Commons in very good mood—better to have left them alone.
Cripps: General effect was bad.
Churchill: Disagreed.
Cripps: They might wait—at least until PM had finished his speech.
Churchill: Didn’t worry me.28

Cripps’s stock nosedived. He decided to resign. Churchill did not want that—yet. He thought Cripps meant to force another political crisis and bring down his government. He wanted Cripps out of the War Cabinet where he was a rival, but inside the Cabinet as Minister of Air Production, where he could do important work. He instructed Eden to tell this to Cripps. Cripps told Eden: “we should all get on better without Winston.”29 But Churchill outmaneuvered Cripps. The Allies had just mounted “Operation Torch,” the invasion of Northwest Africa. Churchill told Cripps it would be unpatriotic to resign and perhaps force a crisis in the middle of so important a maneuver. Naively Cripps agreed. Think about it: if Operation Torch went badly then everyone in the Government would resign, perhaps even Churchill. If it went well the Government would be popular and Cripps would resign alone. When Operation Torch succeeded and Cripps resigned, nobody noticed. They were too busy celebrating.

Endnotes
1. Interview with Anthony Eden, 25 September 1968, Morrison Papers, 6/1, London School of Economics.
3. Beaverbrook to Bevin, 22 November 1941, Bevin Papers, 3/1, Churchill Archives Centre.
6. Ibid., p. 327.
11. War Cabinet Minutes, 5 October 1942, CAB 195/1, National Archives.
12. Churchill to Woolton, 14 July 1940, Churchill Papers, CHAR 20/2A.
15. Eden diary, 13 April 1941.
21. Henry Sylvester to Lloyd George, 26 January 1942, Lloyd George Papers, LG/G/24/1, House of Lords Records Office.
22. Ibid., 9 February 1942.
27. Hansard, 7 and 8 September 1942.
28. War Cabinet Minutes, 9 September 1942, CAB 195/1.
29. Eden Diary, 1 October 1942.

Jonathan Schneer is Professor of History at Georgia Tech. His book Ministers at War is reviewed on page 38.
Churchill & the Empire’s Armies

By Raymond Callahan

The period from the fall of France in 1940 to the beginning of Barbarossa in 1941 is often described as the year Britain “stood alone.” Churchill, of course, is responsible for that description, but it was not, in fact, accurate. The Dominions, the empire and above all India constituted collectively a powerful bloc, capable of supplying men, materials, foodstuffs and finance. It was true that the task of mobilizing, arming and coordinating the empire was formidable, but so was the power it could—and did—ultimately generate. It is a deserving story historians are only beginning to investigate.

To start, the Dominions all had miniscule military cadres (in Canada’s case, for example, 4261 officers and men) on which to build their armies. All the Dominions relied on volunteers instead of conscripts for overseas service. And with small populations, all were highly sensitive to casualties. Above all, the Dominion armies could not simply be given orders—there were governments to be consulted in Ottawa, Canberra, Wellington, and Pretoria. Moreover, every Dominion contingent commander had a “charter” that gave him the right to appeal to his government if he received orders that seemed to him to endanger his force unnecessarily. The charters were rarely invoked largely because British commanders knew they were there and handled Dominion formations cautiously.

Churchill’s excellent relations with New Zealand and especially with Gen. Bernard Freyberg [see Finest Hour 161] smoothed matters with the smallest Dominion. Freyberg’s impressive record of valour made him someone even Monty hesitated to cross. South Africa’s forces, the most sensitive of all to casualties, were safeguarded by the warm relationship J.C. Smuts, the Union’s prime minister, enjoyed with Churchill. Canada’s army was not committed to battle (apart from Mountbatten’s fiasco at Dieppe) until 1943 and was handled with great care by Alan Brooke and Montgomery (who both had little time for most Canadian generals—Guy Simmons being the exception).

Unsurprisingly, Australia proved the most difficult Dominion. A prickly sense of independence and a suspicion that their troops might be put in impossible positions by British commanders led to several major clashes between Canberra and London. The Australians insisted in the summer of 1941 that their 9th Division, which had been besieged at Tobruk since April, was due for relief, and, in the face of vehement objections from Churchill, carried their point. Then, in March 1942, Churchill wanted two Australian divisions, en route home after two years of yeoman service in the Middle East, diverted to Rangoon in an attempt to hold Burma (largely to please the Americans). The Australians, feeling imminently threatened by the Japanese, and having just lost a division at Singapore, refused, and, to Churchill’s intense anger, went on refusing even after the prime minister enlisted FDR to lean on them. Privately, Churchill was furious with the Australians over both episodes,
anger to which he ultimately gave full expression in his memoirs. In both cases, though, the Australians were right.

The Colonies

If the Dominions had to be handled carefully, their generals humored and their quirks overlooked—one South African divisional commander simply ignored orders he did not like—the dependent empire could simply be told what to do. If there is truly a “forgotten army” in the story of imperial Britain’s last great war, it is not Slim’s Fourteenth, which, after all, had Slim to celebrate it. The really overlooked units—by Churchill in his memoirs and nearly everyone else—are the three divisions raised in the African colonies, two in West Africa (81st and 82nd West African) and one in East Africa (11th East African). With only tiny cadres of lightly equipped pre-war African regulars available to build upon, raising these formations was a huge challenge for the colonial administrations. In addition to service in the East African campaigns, the African divisions served in Burma, where they outnumbered British divisions. Their role is only beginning to be looked at, but they were an important component of Britain’s global war effort.²

India

However, as important as the Dominions and colonies were, they were overshadowed by the war effort of the Indian Empire. Largely unrecognized in Churchill’s memoirs and only now receiving significant scholarly attention, the Raj in its twilight was a massive contributor to the imperial coalition. Alone India made possible the British war effort east of Suez. One of the first units to arrive in 1939–40 as reinforcement for Britain’s vast, poorly defended Middle East theater was the 4th Indian, which compiled as impressive a record as any division that fought under the Union flag. A second regular Indian division soon followed the 4th to the Middle East. It was the collapse of France, however, that radically changed the nature of the Indian Army’s war.³

Britain’s greatest—and least soluble—problem was demographic. The British had to maintain what was until 1944 the world’s largest navy and, throughout the war, the largest allied merchant fleet, the huge air force thought at one point to be the key to victory, as well as the industrial and agricultural support base—all from a population less than 50 million. Moreover the army, in 1940, had been virtually disarmed. The BEF had left ten divisions’ worth of equipment in France. The only completely equipped division in the British Isles on the morrow of Dunkirk was a new, inexperienced Canadian formation. The demands of home defense and the needs of the suddenly vulnerable imperial bastion in the Middle East far exceeded what the British Army could, in the foreseeable future, put in the field. The answer—the only answer under the circumstances—was for the British Army to re-equip initially for home defense while relying on imperial resources for nearly everything else.
The Dominions could provide some units, but not many. The real answer was India. The Indian Army, a long service regular force with small reserves, had begun a slow expansion in 1939. In the crisis of 1940, the Government of India was told by London to raise the largest possible army as quickly as it could. By the time Japan entered the war, India was committed to seventeen new divisions (plus independent battalions and brigades and very large numbers of support formations—and, of course, sustaining the regular divisions deployed overseas in 1939–40). Manpower was not a great problem; by 1945 the Indian Army with 2.5 million men was the largest voluntarily enlisted army in history. But if manpower was plentiful, nothing else was. The armored divisions being raised by early 1942 had not a single modern tank among the three. The phrase “equipment-starved environment” does not even begin to touch the realities.

Lack of equipment was only part of the problem. Rapid expansion led to a sharp drop in quality as pre-war ranks were diluted. This problem was only successfully addressed in 1943 by capping expansion and instituting the remarkable training and doctrinal transformation that produced the celebrated Fourteenth Army of 1944–45. Despite the handicaps, however, the Indian Army poured troops into the Middle East, where they played a crucial role. Britain’s retention of control over this vast area, in fact, was only made possible by the Indian Army, which was simultaneously reinforcing Malaya and Burma. Indeed, the war against Japan rested almost entirely on the Indian Army.

**Deserving Respect**

Even as it was deployed overseas, this Indian Army came face to face with what might be called a deficiency of respect. Its officer corps was entirely separate from that of the regular British Army—a legacy of the Indian Army’s eighteenth-century origin as the private force of the East India Company. There had always been a degree of tension between the officers of the Indian Army and those of the regular British Army. The social class origins of the two groups were quite different—the Indian Army being much more middle class. There was in the attitude of many British officers towards the Indian soldiers not only condescension but a strong touch of racism: these were non-white troops, and they and the British officers who commanded them were just not quite as good. It was, unfortunately, an attitude shared by Winston Churchill.

This lack of regard for the Indian Army by British generals is illustrated by the fate of Major General Pete Rees. During the chaotic withdrawal to the Alamein line after Rommel’s smashing victory in the battle of Gazala-Tobruk in May–June 1942, the 10th Indian Division under the command of Rees was ordered to hold a position that he rightly regarded as totally indefensible. When Rees told Lieutenant General W.H.E. “Strafer” Gott, his corps commander (and a British Army officer), that the position simply could not be held, he was promptly sacked for lacking determination. No sooner had Gott removed Rees than he had to pull the 10th Indian back to avoid its destruction—exactly what Rees had told him was necessary. Given the same sort of ill-conceived orders, Major General Dan Pienaar of the 1st South African Division flatly refused to obey them.
and continued retreating until he reached a position he felt his division could defend, which turned out to be the Alamein line. There was, of course, no question of sacking Pienaar. Returning to India, Rees took command of the 19th Indian Division, one of the best and most aggressively led forces in Slim’s Fourteenth Army.6

The British Army

The last army I want to consider is the British Army itself. It was, of course, the one that mattered most to the prime minister, who felt strongly that national prestige depended crucially on military success. His memoirs are full of minutes and messages about army matters, ranging from appointments and theater strategy to tactics and equipment (and he worried terribly about the army’s fighting spirit during the run of disasters in the first half of 1942). His actual impact on the Army was, however, more limited than his memoirs suggest. The processes of change and adaptation in the British Army during the war were driven by internal dynamics, as David French has shown in his very important study Raising Churchill’s Army.7

Churchill, of course, played a crucial role in determining where the army would fight and in filling some very important senior appointments. Perhaps the most significant of those was Alan Brooke’s appointment as Chief of the Imperial General Staff, replacing the ineffective Dill. Brooke—Monty’s patron and protector—was the dominant figure in the British Army from 1942 onwards. A gunner himself, he and Monty—a cautious infantryman—shaped the British Army’s approach to battle from late 1942 onwards: one that was careful of British manpower (inexorably dwindling from 1942 onwards), heavily dependent on carefully orchestrated set piece attacks with massive artillery support, good at break-in and breakthrough, less good at dynamic pursuit. These were the tactics of the “Last Hundred Days” in 1918, the lesson of meticulous preparation and caution the British Army had expensively learned from the bloodbaths of 1915–1917. They brought success, limited but real, at an acceptable cost. That was what Churchill wanted and needed and what Brooke and Monty gave him.

Conclusions

Britain, like all empires before it, depended heavily on imperial resources to wage war; but its unusual empire enforced an unusual war-making style—one little understood at the time by Britain’s American allies, and often misunderstood since. Perhaps some of that misunderstanding is due to Churchill himself. His immensely influential memoirs told his story and Britain’s—indeed, for a generation and more after their publication, they stood as a quasi-official history of Britain’s war, and remain indispensable to the historian. Churchill acknowledged Dominion contributions but did not dwell on them; he never acknowledged that without the Indian Army the Middle East could not have been held nor the war east of Suez prosecuted. (In the index to Their Finest Hour, which covers the months in 1940 when the Indian Army began its massive expansion, there is exactly one entry about that army.)

Winston Churchill was a peerless war leader. But, although he was determined to maintain Britain’s great power standing, which he identified with empire, he is not the best source for what that empire contributed to the truly astonishing global war effort he led. That gap in the story is now, slowly, being filled in by platoons of historians—who are, as he predicted, highly unlikely to sell anything like as many books as he did.8

Endnotes

1. A very good overview is available in Ashley Jackson, The British Empire and the Second World War (London, 2006).
3. There is a beautifully written overview in Philip Mason, A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, Its Officers and Men (London, 1974). It is a popular account, nostalgic in tone (Mason was an officer of the Indian Civil Service), but still worth reading. A sampler of recent scholarship on the subject is Kaushik Roy (ed.), The Indian Army in the Two World Wars (Boston, 2012).
4. The Indian Official History, seldom referred to by historians, is very interesting on Indian Army expansion. Produced in the 1950s by the “Combined Inter-Services Historical Section, India & Pakistan,” under the general editorship of Bisheshwar Prasad, it devoted an entire volume to the process: Sri Nandan Prasad, Expansion of the Armed Services and Defence Organisation (Calcutta, 1956). In 1939, Army Headquarters, India estimated that of India’s 390 million, about 10 million were suitable for military recruitment (p. 78).
5. This process has been brilliantly analyzed by Daniel Marston, Phoenix from the Ashes: The Indian Army in the Burma Campaign (Westport, CT, 2003). Tim Moreman, The Jungle, The Japanese and the British Commonwealth Armies at War 1941–45 (London, 2005) is also very useful.
7. Published in London in 2000.

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Raymond Callahan is Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Delaware. He is the author of Churchill and His Generals (2007) and is currently working on a history of Britain’s Indian Army.
KNIGHTHOODS

There were seventeen different levels of knighthood at this period (though only four which were normal within the military); today this number has been reduced from seventeen to twelve, with the same four being normal. The latter, in ascending order of precedence, are:

- Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire [KBE]
- Knight Commander of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath [KCB]
- Knight Grand Cross of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire [GBE]
- Knight Grand Cross of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath [GCB]

KBE and KCB denote the Second Class of their respective orders; GBE and GCB denote the First Class. Because the Order of the Bath is senior to the Order of the British Empire, it follows that GCB is slightly better than GBE, and KCB is slightly better than KBE.

The normal procedure was for a three-star officer (Vice Admiral / Lt General / Air Marshal) to become KCB or KBE; in a few special cases two-star officers (Rear Admiral / Major General / Air Vice-Marshal) might receive one of these awards. Appointments in the Order of the Bath would be more likely to go to those in mainstream posts, such as Corps commanders and equivalent; appointments in the Order of the British Empire might go to those of three-star rank in staff or support roles. This was by no means a general rule, but gives some idea of possible distinctions between one order and another.

Four-star officers (Admiral / General / Air Chief Marshal) would be likely to be appointed to the First Class of one of the orders, either to the one to which they already belong or to the other order.

PEERAGES

As far as World War II is concerned, we need consider only the three lowest degrees: baron, viscount and earl. Listed with the highest military ranks they ultimately attained, those awarded peerages were:

Royal Navy

AF Sir Andrew Cunningham: C-in-C Mediterranean Fleet 1939–42 and 1943; First Sea Lord 1943–46. Created Baron Cunningham of Hyndhope 1945; advanced one degree to become Viscount Cunningham of Hyndhope, 1946.

AF Lord Louis Mountbatten: Chief of Combined Operations 1941–43; Supreme Allied Commander South East Asia 1943–46; Viceroy of India February–August 1947 / Governor General 1947–48; First Sea Lord 1955–59; Chief of Defence Staff 1959–65. Created Viscount Mountbatten of Burma, 1946. On the independence of India in 1947 his role there changed from Viceroy to Governor General, when he was advanced one degree to become Earl Mountbatten of Burma.

AF Sir John Tovey: C-in-C Home Fleet 1940–42; C-in-C The Nore 1943–46. Created Baron Tovey, 1946.

AF Sir Bruce Fraser: C-in-C Home Fleet 1942–44; C-in-C Pacific Fleet 1944–46; First Sea Lord 1948–51. Created Baron Fraser of North Cape, 1946.

Army

FM Viscount Gort: C-in-C British Expeditionary Force 1939–40. He already held a hereditary viscounty in the peerage of Ireland (which gave no entitlement to a seat in the House of Lords); in 1946 he was given a further viscounty with the same title in the peerage of the United Kingdom, which gave him a seat.


FM Sir Archibald Wavell: C-in-C Middle East 1939–41; C-in-C India 1941–43. Created Viscount Wavell, 1943. After his tenure as Viceroy of India in 1943–47, he was advanced one degree to become Earl Wavell.


FM the Hon Sir Harold Alexander: C-in-C Middle East 1942–43; Supreme Allied Commander Mediterranean 1944–45. Created Viscount Alexander of Tunis, 1946. After his tenure as Governor General
of Canada in 1946–52, he was advanced one degree to become Earl Alexander of Tunis.


FM Sir William Slim: Commander XIV Army (Burma) 1943–45; CIGS 1949–52. After his tenure as Governor General of Australia in 1953–60, he became Viscount Slim. Slim was relatively junior in Burma. Though in command of an Army, there were two levels of command above him in the Far East. He actually retired from the Army in May 1948, but was recalled to become CIGS in January 1949.

General Sir Hastings Ismay: Chief Staff Officer to the Prime Minister (as Minister of Defence) 1940–46; First Secretary General of NATO 1952–57. Created Baron Ismay, 1947.

Lt Gen Sir Bernard Freyberg VC: Commander, New Zealand Expeditionary Force in Crete, North Africa and Italy 1941–45. In 1951, near the end of his tenure as Governor General of New Zealand in 1946–52, he became Baron Freyberg.

Royal Air Force

MRAF Sir Cyril Newall: Chief of Air Staff 1937–40. After his tenure as Governor General of New Zealand in 1941–46, he became Baron Newall.


MRAF Sir Arthur Tedder: Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe 1944–45; Chief of Air Staff 1946–50. Created Baron Tedder, 1946.


MRAF Sir Arthur Harris: C-in-C Bomber Command 1942–45. Received no peerage, though he was advanced from KCB to GCB in 1945. It was said that he refused a peerage because Bomber Command aircrews had been denied a special campaign medal of their own. He was made a Baronet (a hereditary knighthood that made him Sir Arthur Harris Bt) in 1953 during Churchill’s premiership of 1951–55.

ORDER OF THE GARTER / ORDER OF THE THISTLE

Of the above, the following were also appointed Knights Companion of the Most Noble Order of the Garter: Mountbatten 1946, Brooke 1946, Alexander 1946, Montgomery 1946, Ismay 1957, Slim 1959, Portal 1946. Cunningham, being a Scot, was appointed to the Most Ancient and Most Noble Order of the Thistle (Scotland’s equal to the Garter) in 1945.

NOTES

The three Chiefs of Staff (Cunningham / Brooke / Portal) were initially given the lowly degree of Baron; these awards were made in September 1945 when the war had very recently ended. They were all advanced one degree to become Viscounts in January 1946; among other factors, this ensured that their subordinates (Mountbatten / Alexander / Montgomery) who were made Viscounts later in 1946 could not out-rank them.

Pro-consular service in the Empire and Commonwealth as Viceroy or Governor General, often subsequent to the award of honours for military service, regularly earned an advancement to a higher degree in the peerage than that already bestowed.

Paul H. Courtenay is a Senior Editor of Finest Hour.
Winston Churchill dealt with numerous US military officers during the Second World War. The highest ranking and most important of these was George C. Marshall, the chief of staff of the US Army throughout the entire war and the officer Churchill later proclaimed “the true ‘organizer of victory.’”

As with all Americans with whom he dealt, Churchill had to persuade Marshall to agree to his plans. And persuading George Marshall to do anything was not an easy task.

Marshall possessed a distant and rather forbidding personality. “The moment General Marshall entered a room,” Dean Acheson recounted, “everyone in it felt his presence. It was a striking and communicated force. His figure conveyed intensity, which his voice, low, staccato, and incisive, reinforced. It compelled respect. It spread a sense of authority and calm.” As Secretary of State in 1947, Marshall told Acheson, then deputy secretary, that he would “expect the most complete honesty, particularly about myself. I have no feelings except those reserved for Mrs. Marshall.”

Marshall insisted on speaking “truth to power.” He risked his career during the First World War by lecturing his commanding officer General John J. Pershing. Later at a large White House meeting in 1938, before he became chief of staff, Marshall bluntly told President Franklin D. Roosevelt that he did not agree with the president’s rearmament plans “at all.” Throughout the war Marshall made clear to FDR his disagreements with presidential decisions and kept a personal distance from Roosevelt so as not to be manipulated, insisting that he be referred to as “General Marshall” rather than “George” and refusing to visit the president at his Hyde Park home or even to laugh at his jokes.

Marshall also kept his distance from Churchill, and according to Harry Hopkins, President Roosevelt’s closest wartime adviser, his apparent immunity during the war to Churchill’s oratory made him “the only general in the world” Churchill feared. He also may have been the only man to walk out on the two warlords at once. After being summoned to one of Churchill’s late night sessions with Roosevelt in June of 1942, Marshall dismissed their idea to send a US Army to the Middle East as “an overthrow of everything they had been planning for” and walked out of the room with the comment that he would not even discuss the issue “at that time of night.”

To make matters worse, Marshall and Churchill held conflicting views as to proper strategy during the war. They also possessed sharply different personalities and histories.

A few similarities existed between the two. Both had grown up with distant fathers and American mothers, had...
received military educations, had been poor students, and had needed help in obtaining their military commissions. Both were also highly ambitious, myths to the contrary about Marshall notwithstanding, and both had served on the Western Front during the First World War. Each possessed exceptional speaking ability, and each would receive a Nobel Prize, albeit in different fields.

But their differences far outweighed such similarities. Marshall awoke early and went to bed early, whereas Churchill was notorious for his late nights and late mornings in bed. While Churchill’s nights were filled with alcohol, Marshall did not drink at all during Prohibition and after repeal did so only modestly. Churchill was famously witty, Marshall taciturn. One came from the upper class, the other from the middle class. Their speaking styles were also different, and while Marshall refused to write his memoirs (supposedly turning down a million dollar offer to do so after the war), Churchill wrote six volumes. Finally, while Churchill was a career politician, Marshall refused even to vote, let alone run for office. Indeed, when asked for his “political faith” he quipped that his father had been a Democrat and his mother a Republican, while he was an Episcopalian.

Most importantly, though, while Churchill and Marshall shared certain broad strategic views about the war, their differences over execution were profound. Both agreed by early 1941 that the United States and Great Britain should fight together against the Axis powers, avoid the mistakes of the First World War coalition, and focus on defeating Germany before Japan. But they disagreed strongly on how any of this should be done.

At the ARCADIA conference a few weeks after Pearl Harbor, the Allies agreed to the formation of an Anglo-American Combined Chiefs of Staff but disagreed as to whether it should be headquartered in London or Washington. Churchill also objected strongly to Marshall’s innocuous-sounding proposal of “unity of command,” the idea of placing all British and American forces in each theater under a single commander. What could an army officer possibly know about handling a ship, the prime minister belligerently asked. “What the devil does a naval officer know about handling a tank?” Marshall shot back. His aim was not to turn sailors into tank drivers but to obtain unified control of Allied forces so as to be able to plan logically and defeat the common enemy.7

Churchill gave in to Marshall on “unity of command” and the location of the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington, but there was long-lasting disagreement regarding the proper strategy to adopt in order to defeat Germany. Marshall favored the “direct” approach of cross-Channel operations in northern France as soon as possible. The Prime Minister preferred a peripheral strategy focusing on the Mediterranean before any attempt to cross the Channel. On his way to the ARCADIA Conference, Churchill prepared a lengthy memorandum for the Americans explaining and supporting his views.8

Marshall did not voice any objections to British strategy at the ARCADIA Conference, perhaps because he was then too busy trying to stop the massive Japanese offensive in the Pacific. But the General clearly did offer his alternative approach to Churchill’s in March and April 1942 via the so-called “Marshall Memorandum.” This plan, drafted by then-unknown Brigadier General Dwight D. Eisenhower, proposed the immediate concentration in Great Britain of Anglo-American forces (code-named BOLERO) for a massive 1943 cross-Channel assault (ROUNDUP) or a much smaller operation in the fall of 1942 with forces then available (SLEDGEHAMMER) if Germany weakened or the Soviet Union appeared to be on the verge of collapse. Churchill and the British Chiefs of Staff agreed during Marshall’s visit to London in April in order to get US troops into Great Britain via BOLERO and prevent a possible US shift to a Pacific-first strategy, but they had no intention of carrying out what they considered a suicidal SLEDGEHAMMER in 1942. And Churchill in June and July convinced FDR to back instead Operation GYMNAST, the invasion of French North Africa. “This has all along been in harmony with your ideas,” Churchill wrote Roosevelt on 8 July. “In fact it is your commanding idea. Here is the true second front of 1942.”9

Marshall and US naval chief Admiral Ernest J. King tried to prevent
this by proposing to Roosevelt on 10 July a formal shift to a Pacific-first strategy should Churchill continue to refuse to launch SLEDGEHAMMER. FDR angrily rejected the idea as exactly what Hitler wanted the US to do, as well as the equivalent of “taking up your dishes and going away” and “something of a red herring, the purpose for which he thoroughly understood.” In short, it was an obvious bluff. Instead the President sent his two commanders along with Hopkins to London with orders to reach agreement with the British on some offensive action in the European theater in 1942. SLEDGEHAMMER remained his first choice, but if the British maintained their refusal to cross the Channel in 1942 then his emissaries were to agree to launch GYMNAST instead. That is exactly what they were forced to do a few weeks later, with the operation renamed TORCH.10

Marshall was humiliated by this episode. His own Commander-in-Chief had chosen Churchill’s approach over his own. And as he and his staff had predicted, this first “false step” destroyed any possibility of launching a 1943 ROUNDUP, since Anglo-American forces remained tied down in Tunisia until May. Consequently he was forced to agree at the January 1943 Casablanca Conference to the British proposal to follow eventual victory in Tunisia with the invasion of Sicily instead. “We lost our shirts,” wrote the then-Brigadier General Albert C. Wedemeyer of Marshall’s staff. “One might say we came, we listened and we were conquered.”11

After the Casablanca Conference, Marshall and Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson spent the rest of 1943 convincing FDR to back a 1944 ROUNDUP over any further activity in the Mediterranean after the invasion of Sicily. They also tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to convince Churchill, who in turn tried to convince Marshall to support more activity in the Mediterranean instead. A compromise was reached at the May TRIDENT Conference in Washington, whereby Marshall agreed to additional Mediterranean actions designed to knock Italy out of the war, but only if the British agreed to a 1944 cross-Channel attack with a specific target date of 1 May and the transfer of seven Mediterranean divisions to Great Britain for this purpose. The British chiefs of staff were willing to agree to this compromise. Churchill changed his mind and refused to do so, however, because of Marshall’s refusal to agree to the actual invasion of the Italian mainland. When Roosevelt backed Marshall, the Prime Minister conceded only on condition that Marshall accompany him to Algiers to meet with Eisenhower, where he hoped to convince both American generals to invade Italy.

Scheduled to go with Admiral King to the Pacific after the TRIDENT Conference ended, Marshall objected to “being traded around like a piece of baggage.” Still, he agreed to go. To fend off another attack of Churchillian rhetoric regarding Italy before having a chance to confer with Eisenhower, Marshall on the flight to Algiers distracted the Prime Minister with questions on a variety of historical topics including the impeachment trial of Warren Hastings, the flight to England of Rudolph Hess, and the abdication of Edward VIII. According to Marshall’s official biographer Forest C. Pogue, this proved “the perfect red herring,” as it kept Churchill talking until lunch!12

In Algiers, Churchill pressed for an invasion of the Italian mainland, including the capture of Rome, as the only “worthy objective” capable of drawing German forces from the Eastern front and creating favorable conditions for the 1944 cross-Channel assault. Marshall in turn insisted that the final decision on the matter await the results of the invasion of Sicily (HUSKY), then scheduled for early July, and Eisenhower’s future recommendations, as well as the looming major confrontation on the Eastern front that led to the Battle of Kursk. Marshall also refused to engage in prolonged debate with Churchill, a refusal that apparently convinced the Prime Minister that the Americans would support the Italian invasion if HUSKY proved to be an easy operation. That turned out to be the case, and Marshall did agree to the Italian invasion, albeit with limited forces and subject to agreement at the August QUADRANT, conference in Quebec to transfer seven divisions for the May 1944 cross-Channel assault, now codenamed Operation OVERLORD and labeled the “primary” Anglo-American operation for 1944.13

But whereas Marshall saw the invasion of Italy as a way to knock that country out of the war and close down the Mediterranean in preparation for OVERLORD, Churchill viewed it as part of a continuing Mediterranean campaign, including the seizure of Rhodes. To make matters worse, Hitler’s decision to send major German forces into Italy led to a military stalemate in that theater. Churchill consequently pressed for a delay in both OVERLORD and the scheduled transfer of the seven Mediterranean divisions and landing craft, as well as a summit meeting with Roosevelt and his military advisers in Cairo to review and revise Anglo-American strategic plans before their meeting with Soviet leader Josef Stalin in Teheran.

Roosevelt agreed to the Cairo meeting, but invited Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek to the conference in order to focus on strategy for the war against Japan rather than Germany, and refused even to meet privately with Churchill. The frustrated Prime Minister vented his rhetoric on Marshall, keeping him up until 2 AM with pleas for a delay in OVERLORD. The next day Churchill pushed his plan for taking Rhodes, telling Marshall “his Majesty’s Government can’t have troops standing idle. Muskets
must flame.” A harassed Marshall shot back, to a shocked Churchill that “not one American soldier is going to die on [that] goddamned beach.”

The issues were finally resolved at Teheran, when Roosevelt and Stalin in effect “outvoted” Churchill and forced him to agree to OVERLORD on schedule. Everyone had assumed that Marshall would command the operation, but for months Roosevelt had been warned that his army chief was running the entire US war effort and simply could not be spared for a theater command, no matter how large and prestigious. FDR had avoided making a final decision, but at Teheran Stalin pointedly asked who would command OVERLORD and, when FDR said he had not yet decided, the Soviet leader bluntly shot back “then nothing will come of this operation.” At Cairo immediately after the conference FDR called Marshall in and asked him point-blank if he wanted the command. When the army chief refused to respond directly, insisting that the president had to do what was best for the country rather than George Marshall, Roosevelt responded that it would be Eisenhower, because “I feel I could not sleep at night with you out of the country.”

Despite the Teheran accords, strategic disagreements between Churchill and Marshall continued into 1944 and 1945. First they focused during the spring on whether to invade southern France from Italy as agreed at Teheran (Operation ANVIL) or instead to strike eastward into the Adriatic and the Ljubljana Gap, as Churchill desired. Supported by Roosevelt, Marshall insisted on staying with ANVIL, which was launched in August 1944. Its renaming to Operation DRAGOON led an angry Churchill to mutter that he was being “dragooned” into the operation.

After the successful invasion of Normandy in June 1944, the British raised objections to Eisenhower’s assumption of command of all Allied ground forces from British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, who would then command only one largely British-Canadian Army Group. There was also disagreement over Eisenhower’s insistence on a “broad front” approach, as opposed to Montgomery’s “single thrust” into Germany. Marshall strongly supported Eisenhower’s approach, with a heated “off the record” response to British objections during a Combined Chiefs of Staff session in Malta, just before the February Tripartite summit conference at Yalta. This merged with a final disagreement over whether to attempt to take Berlin before the Russians did, with Marshall as well as Roosevelt backing Eisenhower’s decision not to do so.

The advent of the Cold War soon after World War II led many to accuse Marshall and others of political and strategic naiveté regarding the Soviets for their stands on these issues, as opposed to the supposed political and strategic wisdom of Churchill.

Marshall forcefully rejected such charges in his oral history interviews with Pogue, noting on one occasion that with the exception of the landing craft shortage, nothing “came to our minds more frequently than the political factors. But we were very careful, exceedingly careful, never to discuss them with the British, and from that they took the count that we didn’t observe those things at all. But we observed them constantly, with great frequency, and particular solicitude, so there is no foundation in that. We didn’t discuss it with them because we were not in any way putting our necks out as to political factors which were the business of the head of the state—the president—who happened also to be the commander in chief.”

Churchill and Marshall remained professionally active and in touch with each other after the war. “It gives me great confidence in these days of anxiety,” Churchill informed then Secretary of State Marshall on 24 September 1947, in a handwritten note, “to know that you are at the helm of the most powerful of nations, and to feel myself in such complete accord with what you say and do.” The following year he sent Marshall a copy of the first volume of his memoirs of the Second World War; Marshall responded that he was “tremendously impressed” with the volume and that in his opinion Churchill’s closing paragraphs “are among your finest efforts.” The two also dined together when each visited the other’s country. And when President Eisenhower sent Marshall to represent the United States at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, Churchill, according to Marshall, “dignified me in the [Westminster] Abbey by turning out of the procession to shake hands with me after he had reached the dais.”

Six years later Churchill and Eisenhower visited Marshall in Walter Reed Army Hospital as he lay dying and unable to recognize either of them. Churchill, according to Pogue, “wiped tears from his eyes.”

Actually, Churchill had delivered what may have been the most appropriate eulogy years earlier. At the Potsdam Conference in July of 1945, he dined with Marshall and said afterwards to his physician, “That is the noblest Roman of them all.”

Dr. Mark A. Stoler is Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Vermont and editor of the George C. Marshall Papers. This text is based on his presentation to the Thirtieth International Churchill Conference held in Washington, D.C., in 2013.

Endnotes

Endnotes continued on page 25
Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill and George Smith Patton, Jr., both overcame immense personal barriers to reach greatness, which they foresaw for themselves as children. Identical words described them: arrogant, charismatic, melodramatic, aristocratic, reckless, willful, audacious, defiant, hard-driving, mercurial, irrepressible, idiosyncratic, indispensable.

The common threads of their backgrounds, their perseverance, their bravery, and—ultimately—their history-making contributions form a fabric that should not be dismissed as mere coincidence. A dozen similarities form a fabric worthy of study.

1. Shared DNA

They were distant cousins, sharing four aristocratic family lines that made them either eighteenth or twentieth cousins once removed.¹

A military genius began the Churchill legend. John Churchill’s 1704 victory over the French won acclaim, a title (Duke of Marlborough), and Blenheim Palace, where Winston was born in 1874. Winston’s mother, Jennie Jerome was American.

Patton knew that his family included prosperous colonial merchants, a Revolutionary War general, members of Congress, and Confederate Civil War leaders. Likely, he did not know that even earlier ancestors included monarchs and Magna Carta signatories. Wealth came from Patton’s California ancestors. His birthplace was an estate near modern San Gabriel.

2. Miscast dunces landed in the cavalry

Churchill’s parents were distant, while Patton’s pampered him to excess. Yet both boys were thought somewhat backward or even stupid.

Lord Randolph berated his son, while Jennie was rarely present. But Winston idolized his father and said his mother “always seemed to me a fairy princess: a radiant being possessed of limitless riches and power.”²

At boarding school at age seven, Winston responded with precocious disobedience. The headmaster whipped him, his parents refused to visit, and poor grades reflected his misery. When his beloved nanny found him covered with welts, he was moved to a smaller school run by two kind sisters. At age thirteen, he went to Harrow. Studying only what interested him, history and English, he was rated bright but hopeless.

Lord Randolph decided Winston was military material after seeing him play with toy soldiers. The boy was excited, but his father felt only that he was unfit for anything else. He joined a Harrow preparatory class for the Royal Military College at Sandhurst, but needed tutoring to pass the entrance exam on his third try.

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The British Lion and Old Blood and Guts: Twelve Common Threads

By Paul J. Taylor
Patton’s parents and a doting aunt quickly spotted his learning problems. Their protectiveness prevented formal education. Most likely dyslexic, an adult Patton wrote, “Any idiot can spell a word the same way time after time. But it calls for imagination…to spell it several different ways as I do.”

Patton’s parents read to him for hours daily. He became an illiterate prodigy who memorized much of the *Iliad* and the Bible. Only at age twelve did Patton finally learn to read at a school for the privileged.

Patton aspired to West Point. The odds were steep. A tough exam and a competitive Congressional nomination would be daunting. His father learned the exam could be waived with an acceptable college record. Patton’s family legacy helped get him into the Virginia Military Institute, where he did well. A nomination was secured, and he was admitted to West Point in 1904.

### 3. Steeped in swashbuckling legacies

Enthralled by family exploits from early ages, both felt their fame would be even greater.

Patton’s grandson Robert recalls his father (also a general) and aunt explaining, “Because of the fame their father gained…[and] his sheer vividness in person, he reigns as the family’s exemplary figure, a goal he sought from childhood. He wrote, ‘It is my sincere hope that any of my blood who read these lines will be similarly inspired and ever true to the heroic traditions of this race.’”

For Churchill, a life of fame was routine, especially with a father whose high office often put young Winston in the presence of great figures. His mother’s beauty and elite friends added more influence.

### 4. One-sided devotion

Churchill and Patton were both spellbound by their paternal ancestors. Their insufficiently romantic maternal forebears barely merited interest.

Churchill acknowledged his American side—especially when currying US support—but knew little about those roots. His maternal grandfather, Leonard Jerome, the so-called “buccaneer of Wall Street,” had a dubious reputation best left buried.

But Churchill had three ancestors who sailed on the *Mayflower* as well as family that included US presidents and at least four Revolutionary War soldiers who fought the British. One was at Valley Forge. “What is undisputed,” wrote his grandson, “is that this injection of American blood…kick-started to new triumphs the Marlborough dynasty.”

Patton’s grandson calls the paternal fixation an omission; others say he rejected his mother’s side. Her father, Benjamin Davis Wilson, was a land baron and mayor of Los Angeles. Patton resembled Wilson physically and in self-reliance but regarded his grandfather’s life amassing wealth as vulgar. Yet, those riches made Patton one of the wealthiest officers in the army. He lived conspicuously with many servants, polo ponies, and custom-made uniforms.

### 5. Compensating for what nature did not provide

Neither came by his public personae naturally, and both worked tirelessly to overcome physical disadvantages to perfect their “on-stage” presence.

Churchill had a lisp. Practicing tongue-twisters helped, along with his tireless rehearsal of his speeches. Churchill’s friend F. E. Smith (Lord Birkenhead) said, “Winston has spent the best years of his life writing impromptu speeches.” Churchill’s grandson, also Winston, was told by his grandfather’s personal secretary “Jock” Colville, “your grandfather would invest [about] on hour of preparation for every minute of delivery.”

Patton’s voice was squeaky. Those familiar only with actor George C. Scott’s portrayal in the movie *Patton* would be surprised. Eisenhower aide Kay Summersby wrote that Patton had “the world’s most unfortunate voice, a high-pitched womanish speak.” His solution: endless rehearsals of fierce facial expressions and vulgarity that drew attention from his voice.

Robert Patton describes his grandfather’s work on a “visible personality.” “Creating it required a conscious performance that…he was able to refine, rehearse, and finally unleash.” Eisenhower agreed: “George Patton loved to shock people….This may have seemed inadvertent but…he had, throughout his life, cultivated this habit. He loved to shake…a social gathering by exploding a few rounds of outrageous profanity. If he created any effect, he would indulge in more…[if not,] he would quiet down.”

### 6. Mobilizing the English language

They also sharpened motivational skills that, when needed the most, reached new heights. Churchill inspired the free world; Patton stirred men to push beyond their limits.
Churchill’s grandson described the famous speeches: “his words were electric. Though the situation might appear hopeless…Churchill inspired the British nation to feats of courage and endurance, of which they had never known, or even imagined themselves capable.”

War correspondent Edward R. Murrow famously said, “He mobilized the English language and sent it into battle.”

Patton’s charisma lacked political correctness. The movie Patton opens with a less profane synthesis of pre-D-Day talks. Patton’s grandson observed, “A young officer…recalled him ‘literally hypnotizing us with his incomparable, if profane eloquence…you felt as if you had been given a super-charge from some divine source.” Eisenhower wrote that Patton drew “thunderous applause.”

Patton himself explained: “It may not sound nice to…little old ladies…but it helps my soldiers to remember. You can’t run an army without profanity, and it has to be eloquent profanity. An army without profanity couldn’t fight its way out of a piss-soaked bag….I just, by God, get carried away with my own eloquence.”

Despite cavalry backgrounds, both were pioneers of the tank during the First World War. As First Lord of the Admiralty, Churchill envisioned “Land Battleships.” France created its Renault tank in 1917, and made more tanks than all other nations combined. Renaulds were America’s first tanks and Patton their commander.

They sought harm’s way while certain that a higher calling protected them.

Churchill faced danger as a combat soldier, an escaped prisoner, an early airplane pilot, and on rooftops watching the Blitz. He wrote his mother from the Northwest Frontier, “my follies have not been altogether unnoticed….Bullets…are not worth considering. Besides, I am so conceited I do not believe the Gods would create so potent a being as myself for so prosaic an ending.”

Patton’s life was filled with falls, concussions, sickness, and car crashes. He called one “my usual annual accident.” His grandson called him relentlessly combative, and wrote, “Twice—once while a cavalry lieutenant…he impulsively stepped from behind cover to stand erect by the targets during rifle practice to see how he’d react to bullets whistling by his ear.” In World War I, he led America’s first armor into battle atop a tank, was wounded, promoted, and decorated for bravery. Made a general in 1940, he wrote, “All that is needed now is a nice juicy war.”

Despite masterful communication skills, public missteps upended their careers.

In a 1945 election broadcast, Churchill accused the Labour party of plans to create a Socialist state, saying: “no Socialist system can be established without a political police. They would have to fall back on some kind of Gestapo.” His daughter Mary wrote that, when her mother saw the script in advance, she begged him to remove the passage. He did not. The resulting fallout helped remove him from office.

Patton became frustrated as Bavaria’s post-war governor. He dutifully pursued “de-Nazifaction” by removing 60,000 former Nazis from jobs, but complained about the dismemberment of Germany. Newspapers reported that he compared Nazi party members to Republicans and Democrats. Patton refused a retraction; Eisenhower fired him on 4 September.
1945. On 8 December he was critically injured in a car crash and died thirteen days later.

11. Crystal balls in focus

Both vividly saw Communism as just more totalitarianism. Churchill again became a messenger; Patton tried but did not live past his warnings.

After Ike expressed frustration to Churchill when Patton made a pre-D-Day speech seen as anti-Soviet, Churchill opined that Patton was only stating the obvious.19

Electoral defeat did not diminish Churchill’s world influence. President Harry S. Truman asked him to speak in Fulton, Missouri. His historic speech popularized the term Cold War. Nevertheless, when Churchill returned as Prime Minister, he tried to ease the arms race and reset the “special relationship” with the US. He failed. British influence had waned, both sides resisted, and Churchill’s health declined.

12. Above all, indispensable

One similarity dominates. Churchill and Patton were indispensable in the greatest war in history. They were not alone in that category (Eisenhower, belongs there for example), but their common ground is our focus.

Charles Krauthammer, Pulitzer Prize-winning author, wrote in 1999, “Person of the Century? Time magazine offered Albert Einstein….Unfortunately, it is wrong. The only possible answer is Winston Churchill…because only Churchill carries that absolutely required criterion: indispensability….Without Churchill the world today would be unrecognizable—dark, impoverished, tortured….Victory required one man without whom the fight would have been lost at the beginning. It required Winston Churchill.”20

Patton was no Churchill but, just as America was indispensable to victory, so was Patton to its army. Like General William Tecumseh Sherman in the American Civil War, Patton was not the top commander, but he had the best-trained and motivated armies, ruthlessly won the most critical victories, and ran over more enemy-controlled territory than any commander.

Eisenhower wrote, “The prodigious marches, the incessant attacks, the refusal to be halted by appalling difficulties in communication and terrain, are really something to enthuse about.” Ike loved Patton’s fortune, “He never once chose a line on which he said ‘we will here rest and recuperate and bring up more strength.’”21

Historians argue whether the enemy respected Patton more than other Allied commanders. But the Germans were convinced that he would lead the invasion of Europe. Hitler reputedly described Patton as “the most dangerous man [the Allies] have,” and German Field Marshal Gerd von Runstedt said, “Patton was your best.”22

Paul J. Taylor is a retired healthcare executive and longtime member of The Churchill Centre living in Hingham, Massachusetts. He is a distant cousin of both Churchill and Patton.

Endnotes

1. The Churchill and Patton families are related through any of four ancient common ancestors: Isabella Beauchamp, Sir Robert de Clare, Richard FitzAlan, or Sir Edmund Mortimer.
17. Ibid., p. 259.
The release of the 2014 film The Imitation Game starring Benedict Cumberbatch as Alan Turing gave new life to an old claim that Jonathan Schilling, a software engineer and architect who also does research and writing for Wikipedia, finds no evidence to support.

Alan Turing (1912–1954) was a brilliant mathematician and a founder of computer science. He was one of the codebreakers who worked at Bletchley Park during World War II and who played a major role in breaking the cipher systems used on the German Enigma machine, thereby generating the Ultra intelligence that proved a key factor in many Allied successes during the war. From at least the mid-1980s on, the claim has been made in various news articles, websites, and a few books that Churchill said that Turing made the single biggest contribution to the Allied victory against Germany.

Churchill was introduced to Turing during a visit to Bletchley Park in September 1941, and the following month Turing and three other cryptographers wrote directly to Churchill asking for more administrative resources, a request which the Prime Minister immediately granted. Undoubtedly Churchill believed Ultra intelligence was of vital importance during the war. However, no documentation has ever been found in which Churchill specifically praises Turing, and the claim does not supply a date or a context in which this statement was supposed to have been made. Certainly Churchill made no such declaration in public during his lifetime since the existence of Ultra, remained fully under wraps until nearly a decade after his death.

While it is not inconceivable that Churchill made some kind of statement in private conversation, it seems unlikely that he singled out Turing’s role as distinct from the many others who worked on the project. It is unknown whether Churchill still would have remembered who Turing was by the end of the war, or whether he might have been more focused on people higher up the organizational ladder, such as Bletchley Park directors Alastair Denniston and Edward Travis. Thus, unless more information comes to light, we must say there is no evidence to support this claim. ☺

Continued from Page 20

2. Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., pp. 140–41; and Sketches from Life of Men I Have Known, pp. 147 and 154.
5. Henry L. Stimson Diary, 22 June 1941, Stimson Papers, Yale University, New Haven, CT.
10. Marshall told his authorized biographer that while King was serious about the Pacific-first proposal, he was not. However, evidence shows he was deadly serious, since he and his staff believed that the failure to cross the Channel would lead to a Russian collapse and with it eliminate all possibility of defeating Germany. See Mark A. Stoler, Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy in World War II (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), pp. 79–97.
11. Wedemeyer to Handy, 22 Jan. 1943, National Archives, Record Group 165, OPD Exec. 3, item 1A, papers 5, quoted in ibid., p. 103.
15. FRUS: The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 1943, p. 541.
17. See Pogue, Marshall, 3: Organizer of Victory, for each of these controversies.
22. ibid., p. 510
Our cover artist for this issue is twelve-year-old Grant Agamalian. Grant lives in Orange County, California, but his interest in Churchill began when his Uncle Randy (New York Churchillian Randy Baker) began telling him stories about Churchill and the Second World War. In 2012 Randy took his nephew to the Morgan Library in New York City to see the exhibition “Churchill: The Power of Words,” featuring numerous photographs and documents on loan from the Churchill Archives Centre.

Grant’s interest in history continued to develop with a visit to the Anne Frank Museum in Amsterdam and the Churchill War Rooms in London. An exciting highlight of his trip to London was meeting Randolph Churchill. A chance meeting with Italian stamp collectors in Milan led to another passion: collecting Churchill stamps. The Churchill Centre itself began in 1968 with a small group of enthusiasts who shared the same interest.

Grant provided *Finest Hour* the following description of his cover art:

“The German war is therefore at an end. After preparation, Germany hurled herself on Poland on September 1939; and, in pursuance of our agreement with the French Republic, Great Britain, and the Commonwealth of Nations, declared war. After gallant France had been struck single-handed for a whole year until we were joined by the military might of Soviet Russia, and later by the overwhelming power and resources of the United States of America.” — V-E Day Broadcast

Grant Agamalian
“I chose to do a poster that represents the Second World War and how Winston Churchill saved the world. For three reasons the design represents peace. First, it has Winston Churchill in it, and he was a very peaceful man. Second, it includes the flags of all the Allied countries during the war that worked to preserve peace in the world. Finally, it also has the United Nations flag because the UN is a world peace organization started by Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin Roosevelt.

“I chose to create my design using Photoshop because it was the only medium I could use that would enable me to include all of the different elements that are seen. Also, it was very fun because I got to work with my mom and her business partner, who do wallpaper designs with photography and Photoshop.”

In addition to being a member of The Churchill Centre in his own right, Grant is active in the Boy Scouts. His other interests include football, band, sailing, and—obviously—art and design. 

“THE GERMAN WAR IS THEREFORE AT AN END. After years of intense preparation, Poland at the beginning of September 1939; and, in pursuance of our guarantee to Poland and in agreement with Great Britain, the British Empire and the United States of America.” — V-E Day Broadcast

THIS IS YOUR VICTORY!
Churchill, Menzies, and the Empire at War

By Anne Henderson

They was a relationship bound by its geopolitical umbilical chord—the twentieth-century British Empire. But in 1941 their relationship had been tested. A blitzed Britain faced the threat of falling to Hitler’s Nazi forces, while many Australians (their country providing substantial forces for the North African, Middle East, and Mediterranean campaigns) felt their British chiefs had abandoned them in the Pacific, where the threat from Japan was very real.

It was, indeed, a tyranny of distance.

“Leadership,” wrote Robert Menzies, “is hard to define. It is something to be felt, rather than analysed.”

It is this “feeling” that is explored here in order to paint something of the world of 1940–41 when Robert Menzies and Winston Churchill encountered their demons. One of them failed to prevail in war—only to rise, phoenix-like, in peace time—while the other made greatness his signature, leading Britain through the valley of death until it could be saved by its late arriving allies.

Robert Menzies became prime minister of Australia as leader of the United Australia Party on 7 April 1939, after the sudden death of his predecessor Joseph Lyons in office on Good Friday. It was not an easy takeover. A bitter faction in the Country Party opposed Menzies’ leadership. It divided the non-Labor parties for most of a year. On accepting the prime ministership, Robert Menzies told Governor General Lord Gowrie that he might last just six weeks as PM.

In Australia, it was a time of division in all major parties. Labor had been divided through most of the 1930s and remained so in New South Wales. The United Australia Party still held together, but a handful of UAP backbenchers, who despised Menzies, destabilised MP ranks until Menzies’ resignation in August 1941. As Menzies took office, a group of Country Party MPs who supported him sat separately from their colleagues who opposed his leadership.

Yet it was a time of impending war. Unity was needed. Talk of a national government became an issue. To give the flavour of the times, Labor Opposition leader John Curtin rejected the idea of a national government, saying “If there could be anything worse than a government of two parties it would be a government consisting of three parties.” Historian Gavin Souter has written that it would have been even worse to have “a government of three disunited parties.”
Thus, as Australians listened to their prime minister declare war on 3 September 1939, with Australia supporting Britain against Germany, there were many divisions in the political architecture ready to make the job of unifying a country at war a difficult task.

Australian Labor—its extreme left influenced by the Nazi-Soviet pact—opposed sending of troops to the war against Hitler and argued that home defence was the priority. There were heated debates over the proposed establishment of a register of men for national service.

It was a time of uncertainty. Years of financial stress had suddenly been replaced by the return of world war. Australia had recovered financially more quickly than most in the depression years, yet the shadow of the First World War remained. Appeasement had been futile, but it was not easy to accept the answer must be war.

For all that, the Menzies Government survived, even after a devastating air crash in August 1940, just prior to the 1940 election. It killed three of Menzies’ most trusted ministers. The Menzies Government scraped home at the election—left dependent on the votes of two independents. It would last just a year.

Yet, Frederick Shedden, Defence Department chief for both the Menzies and Curtin governments, has recorded that the military success of Labor’s Curtin government, from 1942 onwards, could not have been achieved “but for the foundations laid by the Defence programs of the preceding United Australia Party Governments. Curtin generously acknowledged the inheritance he had received.” I have documented this in my book Menzies at War.

A s 1941 dawned, both Churchill and Menzies faced monumental difficulties—both stared at their own personal yawning abyss of uncertainty. Still, in many ways they were polar opposites. Menzies was the self-made university medallist and champion of the bar, striding like a colossus among parliamentary colleagues of far less intellectual ability; Churchill was the self-promoting and daredevil aristocrat who had scraped into a military academy and was at odds with many of his Conservative colleagues, who saw him as disloyal for attacking them on and off over decades. For many high-ranking Conservatives, Churchill was still just a loathed Asquith Liberal who had changed sides.

Churchill had also seen war as a fighting soldier over decades and revelled in the contest; Menzies, on the other hand, had been forced to remain at home by his family while his two elder brothers served in the First World War, a fact that was used against him by political opponents.

By late May 1940, Britain and Australia were vastly different in their political perspectives. In Australia, Menzies was grappling with internal dissent in the UAP while national feeling moved between apathy about the war and a feeling that “something must be done.”

In Britain, on the other hand, Churchill headed a national government. But he had only been in the job of PM for a matter of weeks when Britain faced invasion by Germany. At the top, he was also being pressed to strike a deal, tantamount to surrender, with Hitler. Hitler’s forces were redrawing the map of Europe: Paris was about to fall, and the British Expeditionary Force was trapped on the beaches of Dunkirk, in full view of the German Luftwaffe.

The test of character for both Churchill and his followers—at home and across the globe—would be huge. There was no sign until after the Japanese bombed the US fleet at Pearl Harbour in December 1941 that the US would send forces to fight Hitler.

It was against this backdrop, Britain preoccupied with its own possible defeat that Menzies, with his own concerns about Australian troops abroad and the uncertainty around the defences at the British base in Singapore, left Australia on 24 January 1941 in a Qantas Empire Flying Boat.

In an extraordinary journey, hopping his way across the top end to Indonesia, Singapore, Rangoon, Calcutta, Karachi, Bahrain, and Basra, to Palestine and thence to Egypt and Libya, after which he had a long flight across the Sahara and southern Africa, then north to Lisbon, Menzies and his team arrived in England on 20 February.

By the time he began his meetings in London, Menzies had as good a picture of the Empire and its war as any other, and possibly a better one than many. But, as Australia’s High Commissioner in London, Stanley Melbourne Bruce, had warned Menzies, Churchill was dominant and persuading him to change his perceptions would be well nigh impossible.

If Churchill had no imagination for the Empire beyond India and its potential peril at the hands of advancing Japanese, then Robert Menzies would be hard pressed to change him. The fate of Singapore was simply not on Churchill’s horizon—he was looking the other way to America. His quest by then was to woo the United States with copious amounts of attention, in the hope it would come to Britain’s aid.

Menzies extended his weeks in London in vain hope. He attended the War Cabinet and became known for his temerity in having a lone voice that occasionally questioned Churchill’s dogmatism. He dined at Chequers on many weekends; he met with senior Whitehall figures, media barons, and business leaders.
Menzies returned to Australia, only to face the despairing news of the failed Allied campaign in Greece, where Australian forces suffered major casualties, followed by their further defeat at Crete. The Japanese continued to move south, taking Indohina.

As government ministers and the press urged Menzies to return to London for another attempt at persuading Churchill to reinforce Singapore, the Labor opposition, through the National War Advisory Council, would not agree. Losing the support of many Cabinet colleagues, Menzies chose to resign in late August.

It would be the end of Menzies’ role in the war. His administration had committed Australian troops to fight with Britain and set up a war administration. His Labor successor John Curtin would thank him for. But Churchill denied him a post in the Empire’s war effort—even though Governor-General Lord Gowrie and the British High Commissioner in Canberra made representations on his behalf. Churchill did not want a stirrer on his watch.

Menzies would rise again by heading up a movement to create a new political party, the Liberal Party of Australia, and taking it to resounding success in December 1949. And Churchill would sleep soundly the night he heard of the bombing of Pearl Harbour, which brought the United States, into the war against both Germany and Japan.

After the war, Menzies and Churchill struck up an elder-statesmen friendship, with Robert and Pattie Menzies making many visits to Chartwell. The two leaders had long since sorted out their differences of 1941.

Those differences originated in separate understandings of the Empire. For Churchill, the Pacific was another universe. Churchill never visited Australia. As Menzies put it in his memoir Afternoon Light: “Of the Far East he knew nothing, and could not imagine it. Australia was a very different country which produced great fighting men, and some black swans for the pond at Chartwell, but it cannot be said that it otherwise excited his imagination.”

For all that, it was their loyalty to and faith in the values and traditions of the Empire that in 1939 drove both Churchill and Menzies in their commitment to fight Hitler.

And as we have long since known, without Churchill’s will and ability to hold the line in 1940, the freedoms of the West, as we know them now, would not have survived.

Anne Henderson is Deputy Director of the Sydney Institute and author of Menzies's War (2014). This article is adapted from a presentation given to the Churchill Centre of Australia, 17 January 2015.
Leadership This Day

“Leadership This Day” illustrates how Winston Churchill’s example guides and motivates today’s leaders. Contributors come from many fields including business, politics, and the military.

Col. John C. McKay

There were very few things in military administration which a business man of common sense and little imagination could not understand if he turned his attention to the subject.

—Winston Churchill, 1900

Leadership is both simple and complex. Leadership is particularly difficult to assess in an individual such as Sir Winston Churchill. A multifaceted leader who experienced the outermost of nadirs and apexes in a career of remarkable longevity makes an objective analysis of his leadership challenging at best. Serious studies of Winston Churchill’s leadership style and substance are notable for their paucity. The extolment, almost to the point of exaltation in some quarters, of the historical record, and, of course, his own words, hinders rather than nurtures an understanding of Churchillian leadership. Hero worship is notable for its lack of objectivity.

Thus assessing the applicability of Churchillian leadership in the digital age poses two major tests: identifying relevant points of Churchillian leadership; and, how that leadership pertains in the era of connectivity. Additionally, it is not readily apparent how the weighty issues of war, international statesmanship, and national survival are germane to the business community. But they are. Paradoxically, it is the very absence of superior leadership skills in the political arena that so clearly marks the rare individual possessed of such skills, the very skills of which Churchill was so adroitly the consummate master. The exercise of the traits and principles comprising and defining these skills augurs well for success in today’s increasingly interlinked business world.

Evolving, even revolutionary, technology fascinated Sir Winston Churchill. What set him apart, however, was the leadership he consistently brought to bear on bringing technology to the matter at hand. The World Crisis demonstrates a marked reflection on the many facets of war and technological innovation therein. Churchill was the prime mover in matters as complex as fuel conversion within the Royal Navy—from coal to oil—and the securing of adequate oil reserves for the task, the initiation and establishment of a Naval Air Corps, the capital ship development project, the development and deployment of the tank, all while creating a Naval War Staff where none had ever existed before. As First Lord of the Admiralty, Churchill’s leadership in effectively adapting new technology within a rapidly changing world environment remains a model. Under his leadership an innovative system of statistical charts kept track of all vital naval activity. As Minister of Munitions in 1917, he designated a statistical adviser, another first. Recognizing the value of statistics and quantitative analysis, during World War II, first at the Admiralty, then as Prime Minister, he established a Statistical Branch, consistently watched and utilized until final victory. He was equally receptive to, and wholeheartedly supportive of, the arcane yet acutely critical workings of cryptologists at Bletchley Park.

Churchill explicitly compared painting to the art of war: “...the principle is the same. It is the same kind of problem as unfolding a long, sustained, interlocked argument. It is a proposition which, whether of few or numberless parts, is commanded by a single unity of conception.” This is most certainly apropos in today’s business environment, as are the observations, “Every set of assumptions which it is necessary to make, draws new veils of varying density in front of the dark curtains of the future,” and “even the most penetrating gaze reaches only conclusions which, however seemingly vindicated at a given moment, are inexorably effaced by time.”

Churchill’s exposure to military campaigning, the in-depth knowledge and understanding of history, his ability to arrive “at the root of the matter,” the ability to shape a broad vision and stick by it in adversity, and his unequalled utilization of the English language are leadership qualities that unequivocally pertain in the age of connectivity.

Colonel McKay is a twice combat-wounded Marine Corps officer who has separately led organizations composed of US and indigenous forces in war and peace. Responsible for approximately 4000 US personnel and over 10,000 Cuban and Haitian refugees, he executed a humanitarian effort recognized as a model for humane migrant operations.
In early June, Lady Randolph sent the most disapproving letter young Winston ever received from her. After telling her son she would not be coming down to see him at Harrow (“I have so many things to arrange about the Ascot party next week that I cannot manage it”), she got straight to the point.

Your report, which I enclose is as you see a very bad one. You work in such a fitful inharmonious way that you are bound to come out last….

Dearest Winston, you make me very unhappy—I had built up such hopes about you & felt so proud of you—and now all is gone…your work is an insult to your intelligence. If you would only trace out a plan of action for yourself & carry it out & be determined to do so—I am sure you could accomplish anything you wished. It is that thoughtlessness of yours which is your greatest enemy….

His mother’s letter greatly distressed Winston (“My own Mummy I can tell you your letter cut me up very much.”) but he owned up to the gist: “I will not try to excuse myself for not working hard, because I know that what with one thing and another, I have been rather lazy.” He assured her, however, that all was not lost: “[T]here is plenty of time to the end of term and I will do my very best in what remains.”

100 Years Ago
Spring 1915 • Age 40
“He Is in Paris with His Mistress”

Spring 1915 marked Churchill’s political nadir as he was made a scapegoat for the Royal Navy’s failure to force the Dardanelles Straits and the Army’s subsequent defeat by the Turks on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Yet [as shown in FH 166], Churchill had not proposed the Dardanelles operation, but the War Council approved it.

It is now commonly accepted that Churchill was unfairly made the scapegoat for the disaster that followed. Indeed, he was exonerated in 1917 by the Report of the Dardanelles Commission. What the Commission did not consider, however, was which men were most responsible for making Churchill the scapegoat. There were three. In order of importance, they were Lord “Jackie” Fisher, whom Churchill himself had, perhaps improvidently, selected as First Sea Lord in October 1914; Andrew Bonar Law, leader of the Conservative Party; and the Prime Minister Herbert Asquith.

While initially skeptical of forcing the Dardanelles, the seventy-four year old Fisher became an enthusiastic supporter when on 11 March, the Admiralty learned from intercepted German messages that the Turkish forts at the Dardanelles were seriously short of ammunition and would remain so for several weeks. Indeed, the aging Fisher—who had never commanded men or ships in battle—offered to go at once to the Dardanelles and take command of the naval forces there. Fisher maintained his enthusiasm right up until he did not.

When he learned on 18 March that two British battleships had been sunk by mines that day in the Royal Navy’s first attempt to force the Dardanelles, Fisher dispatched four more battleships to the scene and told the War Council a loss of twelve battleships was to be expected in the operation. The next day Fisher learned that the head of Naval Intelligence, Captain William “Blinker” Hall, had, without authorization, sent a letter through British emissaries to the Turks guaranteeing to pay four million pounds if they agreed to a peace with Great Britain or allowed free passage for British ships through the Dardanelles. The First Sea Lord was beside himself at the possibility of being deprived of a glorious victory. As Hall later wrote:

“It was one of those moments when dropped pins are supposed to be heard. Then Mr Churchill turned to Lord Fisher….’D’you hear what this man has done? He’s sent out people with four millions to buy a peaceful passage! On his own!’”

“What!” shouted Lord Fisher, starting up from his chair. ‘Four millions? No, no. I tell you I’m going through tomorrow. Cable at once to stop all negotiations….We’re going through.’”

In the event, the Navy did not “go through,” either then or later. When the British army landings at Gallipoli bogged down in late April, Fisher attempted to rewrite history by claiming that “he was against the Dardanelles and had been so all along.” Churchill wrote to Asquith that Fisher “has agreed in writing to every executive telegram on which the operations
have been conducted; and had they been immediately successful the credit would have been his.”

Fisher had already shown signs of mental instability. Further evidence of instability came when Asquith sent Churchill to Paris on 5 May to assist in negotiations designed to bring Italy into the war on the side of the Allies. Fisher knew nothing of these negotiations but, when Clementine Churchill invited him to lunch at Admiralty House, the increasingly dotty First Sea Lord told Churchill’s wife, “You are a foolish woman. All the time you think Winston’s with Sir John French, he is in Paris with his mistress.” As Martin Gilbert wrote, Clementine “was stung by such a wounding remark. It was for her a sure sign that Fisher’s mind was unbalanced. She reported all this to her husband on his return, fearing that Fisher might break down. The Admiral, she later recalled, was “as nervous as a kitten.”

Fisher resigned on Saturday, 15 May, citing the Dardanelles and Gallipoli as a reason, and promptly sent an anonymous message—in his own distinctive handwriting—to opposition leader Bonar Law advising him of this. Bonar Law—whose hatred for Churchill had remained unabated since the 1912 Home Rule debates—confronted Lloyd George with Fisher’s resignation and threatened an all-out Conservative attack on the Liberal government’s prosecution of the war unless Churchill were sacked. Lloyd George proposed a Coalition government and Bonar Law agreed, his only proviso being that Churchill not have any responsibility in it. Lloyd George went next door to 10 Downing Street and persuaded Asquith to dump Churchill and form a Coalition government in what the Welshman described in his memoirs as “an incredibly short time.”

Unknown to Lloyd George, a principal reason he was able to persuade Asquith so quickly on such a momentous decision was that the Prime Minister was not capable of making rational political judgments at that time. He was heartsick. The previous Friday, 14 May, his long-time love interest, Ventina Stanley, whom he had intensely pursued for more than nine months—and to whom in multiple indiscreet letters, he had repeatedly violated the Official Secrets Act by disclosing political and military secrets—had advised him she was marrying another and would no longer write to him. “This is too terrible, no hell could be so bad,” he wrote to her that night.

Meanwhile, Churchill was summarily booted from his position as First Lord of the Admiralty and, later that year, chose to leave politics to fight in the trenches, convinced that, like his father’s, his political career was finished at a young age.

75 YEARS AGO
Spring 1940 • Age 65
“T HIS WAS THEIR FINEST HOUR”

In spring 1940, as in spring 1915, the British faced another naval and military failure in which Churchill played a major role. Churchill had recommended mining Norwegian waters and occupying the Norwegian port of Narvik the previous September. Prime Minister Chamberlain and the War Cabinet, however, did not authorize such action until the second week in March. Chamberlain claimed in a speech on 2 April that Hitler “had missed the bus.” In fact the Nazis were on an express train. On 8 April, before Britain could land troops in Norway, the German Army occupied Denmark and landed troops at six points on the Norwegian coast, including Narvik. As Churchill wrote on 10 April, “we have been completely outwitted.”

While British troops were subsequently landed at various places on the Norwegian coast several days later, most were forced by German troops to withdraw by the end of the month. Unlike 1915, however, Churchill ultimately was not blamed for the fiasco. On 8 May, when he attempted in the House debate on Norway to “take complete responsibility for everything that has been done at the Admiralty,” Lloyd George replied that Churchill “must not allow himself to be converted to an air-raid shelter to keep the splinters from hitting his colleagues.”

By 10 May, Chamberlain was out as Prime Minister and Churchill was in. At the same time, Hitler had invaded Holland, Belgium, and France. On 16 May, German troops broke through and around the Maginot line. Churchill flew to France only to find that the French had no plans for a counterattack. On 20 May, after learning that President Roosevelt would not let Great Britain have fifty obsolete destroyers, Churchill wrote FDR, reminding him that while his government would never surrender, he could not speak for subsequent governments if Britain “was left by the United States to its fate.” In that event, he admonished FDR not to be “blind to the fact that the sole remaining bargaining counter with Germany would be the fleet.”

During this last week in May, Churchill was also successfully beating back a determined effort by his own Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, to accept Mussolini’s offer to negotiate a general peace with Germany.

By 3 June, Britain had evacuated from Dunkirk more than 224,000 British and 111,000 French troops. On 8 June, Churchill decided to send no more aircraft to France because, as he told the French Prime Minister, it would ruin Britain’s ability “to continue the war.” On 17 June, a new French government asked Germany for an armistice.

The next day, Churchill told the House of Commons that “Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this island or lose the war….Let us brace ourselves to our duty and so bear ourselves that if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years men will still say, “This was their finest hour.”
Sir Martin Gilbert: In His Own Words

The Churchill Centre’s great friend and honorary member the Rt. Hon. Sir Martin Gilbert passed away on 3 February at the age of 78. Fittingly, he was buried in the British section of the Beit Shemesh cemetery in Israel just west of Jerusalem.

The Autumn 2014 issue of Finest Hour contained tributes to Sir Martin from his many friends and admirers, which his wife Esther was able to share with him before his death. He was both a great historian and a great humanitarian. Thus we leave the final word to the man himself.

I was born in London in October 1936. As my working life has been that of a historian, it is natural for me to look back over my life in historical terms.

The Second World War broke out when I was two-and-a-half years old. Nine months later, as Britain faced a German invasion, I was evacuated to Canada. I have vivid memories of the transatlantic crossing, from Liverpool to Quebec, although I was not yet four years old.

It was in Canada that I learned to read and write. Then, when I was seven-and-a-half years old, and while the war was still being fought, I was brought back to Britain on board the ocean liner Mauretania, then a troopship with mostly American troops on board.

I was in Britain, living just outside Oxford, when Germany surrendered on 8 May 1945. That day I joined a large crowd on the nearest hill where we built a huge bonfire and set alight a straw Hitler and a straw Mussolini.

From 1945 to 1955 I was at a boarding school in London, Highgate School. Two history teachers there, Tommy Fox and Alan Palmer, encouraged me to learn history—and to write it. Several of the teachers had fought in the First World War, including the headmaster, Geoffrey Bell. From these masters came my interest in the First World War—an interest that was to lead me to make many visits to the battlefields of the Western Front, to war cemeteries, and to monuments and memorials throughout Britain and Europe, the Gallipoli peninsula, and the Middle East.

In 1955 I left school. After a mere two weeks footloose and fancy free in London indulging in the theatre, including the Old Vic to see Richard Burton and Claire Bloom in Hamlet, I began the compulsory two years National Military Service.

I left the army in the spring of 1957 and travelled to the Balkans and Turkey, in both of which I taught English. That October I went to Oxford University, where I studied history at Magdalen College. My teachers included the often acerbic but always challenging A.J.P. Taylor, who was then writing his history of the origins of the Second World War.

In the summer of 1959, while still at Oxford as an undergraduate, I went to Poland, which was then behind the Iron Curtain. This Polish visit—the first of many—had two major repercussions on my future research and writing.

First, I travelled to Poland with another undergraduate, Richard Gott, who became my first pupil after I graduated. He and I were to co-author my first book (“our” book), The Appeasers (1963), about British policy before the Second World War, especially towards Czechoslovakia and Poland. Our documented criticism of Neville Chamberlain and the policy of appeasement provoked considerable comment and even controversy when the book was first published.

The second repercussion of my 1959 Polish visit was a growing interest in the Holocaust. This led to eight books in all, researched and written over the next forty-three years.

During the course of my researches I would leave England at least once a year on my travels, mostly to Europe. Becoming aware of the impact and range of the geography of wartime Europe led to my publishing an atlas of the Holocaust. I researched the many facts and details for this atlas not only in Europe itself—I made three further visits to Poland in 1968, 1980, and 1981—but also during a sustained visit to Israel in 1979. The archive at the Holocaust museum, Yad Vashem, in Jerusalem, provided an important source. Several of the scholars there gave me invaluable guidance. No historian can work in a vacuum—or alone in an ivory tower.

After graduating in 1960 with a BA in modern history, I went as a Research Scholar to St Antony’s College, Oxford. In 1961 I was elected a Junior Research Fellow at Merton College, Oxford, which became my academic home and research base for almost twenty years. A year after my election—in tandem with my Oxford position—Churchill’s son Randolph asked me to join his research team on the life of his father, which he had just begun to write. I began work the junior on a team of five. For the next six years I would live at Oxford, and teach and write at Merton College, but be prepared to travel across country to
work in the Churchill archive whenever Randolph summoned me.

Randolph Churchill taught me many aspects of the historian’s craft. He was a hard taskmaster but a generous one. Discoveries in archives located far from the Churchill papers were greeted by his enthusiasm. He also encouraged me to go on with my own independent research and writing.

While working for Randolph, making use of my time in Oxford, I also edited the letters, speeches and correspondence of a First World War pacifist, who had gone to prison rather than fight. His name was Clifford Allen. Later, as Lord Allen of Hurtwood, he was active in the appeasement debate. His wife Marjorie, whose own career had included much pioneering work for legislation to protect children, gave me full access to his voluminous correspondence. I called the book, after a phrase that Clifford Allen had used in one of his letters describing his lonely position in public life, *Plough My Own Furrow* (1965).

A seminar that I gave at Oxford in 1965 led me to publish *The Roots of Appeasement* (1966). In it I included, as appendices, several previously unpublished documents. Also, to help my students, I had been drawing sketch maps of historical events, changing borders, and the conflicts of the European powers, as well as their imperial activities. This became my first published atlas, *The Recent History Atlas* (1966).

In 1965 I took a four-month sabbatical from my Oxford and Churchill work to be a visiting Professor to the University of South Carolina. While I was there, Churchill died, and, with Randolph’s approval, I wrote a short, single-volume life of Churchill for Oxford University Press. Randolph read my book in proof, an unnerving experience for me, to have a son read what I had written about his father. But he was full of encouragement. This book is called *Winston Churchill* (1966), and was my first book about Britain’s war leader.

I also edited a book showing Churchill both from his own words, and the words of his contemporaries. This book (1967) was for an American series called Great Lives Observed. It was followed [in 1968.] by a second volume about Lloyd George. I would have edited a third volume in the series, on Mahatma Gandhi, but in 1968 Randolph died.

Following Randolph Churchill’s death, I was asked to take over his task and to complete the Churchill biography—both the main and the document volumes. The Churchill archive was brought to Oxford for my use, and housed in the deepest underground floor of the Bodleian Library. With that treasure trove as my base, I travelled to public and private archives throughout Britain. I also corresponded with many hundreds of Churchill’s contemporaries, and came to know a good number of them as friends. Their recollections, and the archival material which they possessed, became an integral part of my Churchill work.

My own first volume after Randolph’s death, and the third volume of the biography, was published in 1971, *The Challenge of War, 1914–1916*. It was followed a year later by a two-volume set of documents, known as Companion Volumes to the biography.

These “companion volumes” of documents contained a wealth of personal and official correspondence, written by Churchill, and sent to him, as well as transcripts of the many secret meetings at which policy was worked out, including that of the ill-fated attack on the Dardanelles and the subsequent Gallipoli landings. I also published all his private letters from the trenches of the Western Front, where he served during the first five months of 1916: letters to his wife, to his mother, to his close friends, and to his former political colleagues, whom he was desperate to rejoin.

While teaching at Oxford and working for Randolph, I had published *Britain and Germany Between the Wars* (1964), an edition of documents with commentary. In it, I included some letters and documents from Sir Horace Rumbold, the British ambassador in Berlin when Hitler came to power. I was
so struck by the vivid quality of Rumbold’s reports that I went to see his son’s collection of family papers. The result was a full-length biography published in 1973. It is one of the books of which I am most proud.

Later that year I was about to embark on the Middle East research for the fourth volume of the Churchill biography and was visiting Israel, when war broke out there: the Yom Kippur War, also known as the October War. I have never published my experiences of that time, although I did keep a detailed diary. One day, perhaps, I will publish it. [Alas, he did not—Ed.]

While working in the archives on the Churchill biography, I came across many more photographs than I could use in the volumes themselves. I visited a number of photographic archives in London, and found that they were then in the process, inconceivable thirty years later, of weeding out and destroying tens of thousands of photographs, often glass-plate negatives. I determined to rescue as many of the Churchill images as I could. The result was my book Churchill, A Photographic Portrait, published in 1974.

After completing six volumes of the full biography in 1988, and the document volumes spanning the years 1914 to 1939, I bought a new fountain pen and several bottles of ink and set about writing a single-volume biography, Churchill: A Life (1991). This was the culmination of my Churchill work, and enabled me to focus on both Churchill the social reformer and Churchill the war leader.

Many people had asked me to tell the story of writing the Churchill biography. It has been a fascinating thirty-year journey. The result of these requests, from friends and strangers, was In Search of Churchill (1994). My son David took the photographs for the final chapter, about Chartwell.

A year before his death, Randolph Churchill had asked me to draft for him, as part of a book which he and his son wrote on the Six Day War of 1967, a 5,000-word essay on “The Jews from Moses to Nasser.” To prepare this for him, and to widen my own understanding, I drew several dozen maps of aspects of Jewish history. This stimulated me to prepare more maps, for myself, and for a lecture I gave at Oxford, “The Jews versus Geography.” Only my brief speaker’s headings for the lecture have survived, but what did emerge from that lecture was my first book on a Jewish theme, The Atlas of Jewish History (1969).

I put my Churchill hat on again when asked to give the British Academy Thank Offering for Britain lectures. There were three of them, published together as a small volume, Churchill’s Political Philosophy (1981). That same year I completed a study of the most difficult decade in Churchill’s life, Winston Churchill: The Wilderness Years. It went in tandem with a television series of the same name, starring Robert Hardy as Churchill and Sian Phillips as his wife Clementine.

One of Churchill’s friendships, with the literary agent Emery Reves, inspired me to edit the letters and messages they exchanged over a period of more than twenty years. The book, Winston Churchill and Emery Reves: Correspondence was published in 1997, sixty years after the two men had first met.

In my [recent] Churchill endeavours, three books have been published. The first is Churchill at War: His ‘Finest Hour’ in Photographs, 1940–1945 (2003). The second was Churchill’s War Leadership (2004). The third was Churchill and America (2005). This last is a study of Churchill’s sixty-year “love affair” with the United States, in all its moods, setbacks, and successes.

On the tomb of the nineteenth century Church historian Bishop Mandel Creighton are inscribed the words: “He tried to write true history.” Like the bishop—who was a member of my own college at Oxford—I believe that there is such a thing as “true history.”

In my Churchill researches between 1968 and 1988 I read every page of an estimated fifteen tons weight of documentation. The material available in archive is formidable and revealing—revealing of every facet of policymaking, of success and failure, of friendship and opposition, of cause and effect, of mood and motive.

In my own published work, I have avoided the word “perhaps.” It is for the historian either to say what happened, or to say that he cannot discover it. To say, “Perhaps it was like this” is to mask a failure to get to the bottom of a problem: and failure in historical research is no crime. It is one of the hazards of the profession.

Not only do I believe that it is possible to tell a true and straight and clear tale, I also welcome any corrections and amendments and additions to what I have published. My work has continually been enhanced by those who have written to me on matters of detail—to point out errors, or to correct lack of clarity, or to add new factual dimensions.

In my dictionary, the word “pedant” is a paean of praise, and “nit-picking” is a worthy art. ☺

**Review by Anne Sebba**

Surely, not another book about the abdication, I hear you groan? Is there really anything more to say about the Windsors and the one-sided love story that offered a solution to this crisis?

And here I must declare an interest. Having recently written a book about Wallis Simpson myself, I have lost count of the number of times I have been asked that same question. Equally, I am aware of the perennial fascination with the story of the handsome king who gave up his throne to marry a twice-divorced American of no particular beauty. How to explain it? So I was eager to read this new book by Andrew Morton, the journalist who wrote about Diana, Princess of Wales—*Her True Story in Her Own Words*—changing forever the way the world perceived her relationship to the Prince of Wales as well as the way the world now looks at the royal family. Could he pull off the same trick again with an earlier Prince of Wales?

Morton’s new book begins with a longish section retelling the story of the young Prince’s early life, his racy dress sense, his heavy drinking and smoking and above all his improper dalliances and threats of suicide. Then there is the familiar tale of his first serious love affair, that with Freda Dudley Ward where Morton observes Winston Churchill responding to the prince “like a surrogate son” and Churchill’s comment that “It is quite pathetic to see the Prince and Freda. His love is so obvious and undisguisable.” Then we learn about the arrival of Wallis and Ernest Simpson in London and how they got to meet the Prince. Soon Morton is leaping from Chips Channon’s gossipy diary, discussing Emerald Cunard “who is rather eprise [in love with] Herr Ribbentrop (the German Ambassador) through Mrs Simpson,” to a statement that Ribbentrop sent seventeen carnations every day to her London apartment. (Or was it—Morton acknowledges—as some say, roses?) Although nobody can prove either. The number apparently signified one for each day they had slept together; hence, just a few pages later, when the newly abdicated Duke and Duchess are in Germany meeting Hitler at Berchtesgaden, Ribbentrop is described by Morton as Wallis’s erstwhile lover.

Once war was underway and Churchill Prime Minister, the Windsors’ undoubted pro-German, defeatist attitude was clearly unacceptable. By July 1940 there was a major change in the relationship between the Duke and Churchill, with the latter warning the Duke that any refusal not to go where he was sent or to obey military orders would not be tolerated. The Duke, realising that he could no longer rely on Churchill to be his unquestioning ally, eventually left Lisbon for the Bahamas, where the couple spent the remainder of the War with the Duke as Governor but not before Wallis requested diplomats in Lisbon and Nice to organise the return of a favourite green bathing costume which she had left behind in the south of France. From then on, as Lord Moran recorded, Churchill began to dread every time there was a communication with the exiled duke.

The final and most interesting section of the book is concerned with the discovery in 1945 of a file detailing the events of 1940 from the moment when the Duke and Duchess fled their home in France and made their way through neutral Spain to Portugal. German diplomats were constantly sending back to Berlin tales of the couple’s treasonous talk, particularly the Duke’s belief that Britain could not win the War and should therefore make peace as quickly as possible. The Germans in turn considered kidnapping the Duke and keeping him in Spain as a useful negotiating tool.

Details of the Lisbon episode and the Windsors’ bad behaviour were considered so potentially damaging
to the wider royal family as well as to the Duke himself, that Churchill and Clement Attlee, by then prime minister, attempted to have “the Windsor File” suppressed, exempted from plans to publish other material from the German archives.

Morton is no academic historian; there are too many anecdotes that rely on secondary, often rather dubious, sources, too many rumours repeated and “whispers in society circles, willing to believe anything.” One author, quoted by Morton for his account of the wartime activities of the Duke, used a number of documents held at the National Archives in Kew that were subsequently discovered to be forgeries. Morton recounts how, following George V’s death in January 1936, Hitler watched a Pathé newsreel of the new king Edward VIII, and comments, novelistically, that Hitler “may have acknowledged to himself that she seemed to be able to hypnotise men in the way that he could transfix audiences with his mesmerizing rhetoric and penetrating gaze.”

The stories in 17 Carnations may all have been aired elsewhere but Morton writes with journalistic pace, and, by bringing them all together for a twenty-first century readership not familiar with details of the scandals, it becomes clear why Churchill, the Duke’s loyal friend in 1936, was still concerned in the 1950s to protect the institution of the monarchy he so revered as well as the foolish Duke himself. By the time the documents were published, in 1957 under a misleadingly boring title, Edward and Wallis were marginal figures, leading a superficial café-society life and no threat to the existing royal family.

What does make this book a useful addition to the extensive Windsor literature are the photographs: there are some informal ones of Wallis and Edward before they were married as well as some new ones of the couple in Germany in 1937 meeting Hitler and other Nazis. These are interesting even though the trip was undertaken mostly to make Wallis feel she was being treated with Queen-like respect, and it is arguable whether or not they show the Duke’s interest in what he believed Hitler was achieving in Germany.


Jonathan Schneer, Ministers at War: Winston Churchill and his War Cabinet, Basic Books, 320 pages, $29.99/$34.50 (Can).

Review by Mark Klobas

Though Winston Churchill stands today as the man who led Britain to victory in the Second World War, the nature of the British political system meant that he did not do so alone. Running the nation during wartime was a team effort requiring the assistance of some of the most able figures from across the political spectrum. One of Churchill’s responsibilities as prime minister was ensuring that this group of talented individuals worked in relative harmony towards their common goal.

Jonathan Schneer seeks to explain how Churchill accomplished this task. Borrowing openly from the approach adopted by Doris Kearns Goodwin in her study of Abraham Lincoln’s administration, Team of Rivals, Schneer describes Churchill’s ongoing efforts to keep his Cabinet members in harness throughout the war, something we see was no easy task.

From the start of the coalition formed in May 1940, Churchill faced a cabinet composed of many men hostile to his presence. Party loyalty was of little help to him, as many of the men most skeptical of his ascension were members of his own party. Most of these men were ardent supporters of Neville Chamberlain, and they felt that Churchill lacked steadiness for the top job. The preferred successor for these men was the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, whom Schneer argues was waiting in the wings to replace Churchill should the new Prime Minister falter. Rivals indeed.

Ironically, Churchill’s staunchest support during his first months as premier came from the Labour party, whose members would serve under no other Conservative. With their support (and with that of Chamberlain), Churchill was able to weather the threat from the right before nullifying it by easing out the leading Chamberlain men in his government. This gradual reshaping of the Cabinet, Schneer demonstrates, Churchill accomplished with considerable sensitivity to the need for political balance. Within the smaller War Cabinet there was always a scrupulous balance preserved between Conservative and Labour members. The challenge for Churchill was to maintain this balance as individual members came and went.

One of the points Schneer stresses is that, while Churchill is viewed today as “a giant to whom we all owe an unpayable debt” (xix), such a view was not commonplace throughout the war. For many of Churchill’s contemporaries the prime minister was replaceable, and throughout much of 1942 he seemed vulnerable to a challenge.

Stafford Cripps, whose advocacy for the Soviet war effort made him unexpectedly popular at a time when Churchill’s popularity wavered, appeared to represent a challenge. Schneer gives Churchill consider-
able credit for adroitly defusing the problem. The Prime Minister outmaneuvered Cripps politically by giving the austere Socialist enough exposure to allow his appeal to sour and thus allowing him to be easily shuffled into a second-tier office in the Cabinet. Schneer sees a similar, though less threatening test posed by Lord Beaverbrook, whose political adventurism created trouble for Churchill but never cohered into an overt challenge to his position.

As adroit as Churchill was in handling the personalities within his Cabinet, however, he proved largely tone-deaf to the growing leftward shift in domestic politics as the war went on. Schneer sees this as a product of his focus on waging the war and maintaining Britain’s status as a world power. Less interested in domestic policy, he shunted such matters off to others, primarily the Labour members of his coalition. Yet the release of the enormously popular Beveridge Report, in December 1942, with its call for a comprehensive social welfare system, proved impossible to ignore as it exposed the widening ideological divide between the Conservative and Labour members of his own government.

Resolution of the parliamentary debate on the Beveridge Report was left to Herbert Morrison, the Labour Home Secretary, whose able speech stilled dissent on the left. This preserved Churchill’s standing, though it did nothing to arrest the leftward drift in the public mood. It was a testament to Churchill’s popularity that, despite this visible change from the public, Labour leaders preferred not to have a general election so soon after the end of the war with Germany. The broader party, though, voted otherwise at their conference in Blackpool, forcing a general election the results of which surprised everyone involved.

Schneer recounts all of this in a readable narrative that reflects a confidence in his command of the material. Drawing upon a mixture of archival and published materials, he provides an enjoyable description of Churchill’s interactions with many of the leading ministers of his wartime government. Yet as an account of the War Cabinet as a whole the book falls short. By zeroing in on the more visible and challenging personalities, other vital figures, such as Anthony Eden and Clement Attlee, often recede into the background or are seen to play only supporting roles. Consequently, the reader gets a distorted picture of Churchill as a political crisis manager rather than as a wartime leader. It is a role that has been already examined elsewhere, such as in Paul Addison’s The Road to 1945 and Kevin Jefferys’ The Churchill Coalition and Wartime Politics. While Schneer’s account is more colorful and provocative, ultimately it adds little to what we already know about Churchill and the war.

This is unfortunate, for Schneer has identified a potentially fresh new approach to studying this heavily plowed field. Coordinating the diverse array of talents that his cabinet comprised is surely one of the less-appreciated aspects of Churchill’s time as premier, and one that Schneer demonstrates as deserving more attention that it has received. Until then, we have this engaging and oftentimes provocative study, one that highlights how much Churchill’s success in the Second World War was tied to his mastery of the men who served with him.

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Accommodations were even more impressive, including the Kingsmere estate of Canadian Prime Minister W. L. Mackenzie King, the California castle of media tycoon William Randolph Hearst, various Canadian provincial residences, and a host of posh hotels like the Ritz-Carlton in Montreal and the Savoy in New York City. He was also well cared for in both Chicago and New York by financier and statesman Bernard Baruch, whom he had worked with and befriended in the First World War.

In Canada, Churchill gave fourteen speeches, beginning in Montreal and ending in Victoria, preaching imperialism and free trade. In his US speeches, plus various private chats with business, entertainment, and political elites, Churchill promoted First World War debt relief and Anglo-American security cooperation. He also gave sixty-two press interviews, wrote a dozen articles for the Daily Telegraph, and made further publishing agreements to deliver twenty-eight articles for £40,000 by June 1930.

Churchill was enamored of the natural beauty he found including Niagara Falls, Lake Louise, the Rocky Mountains (“Twenty Switzerland rolled into one”), Yosemite Park, and the majestic Redwoods of California (107). Amazingly, he caused a minor media sensation when he caught a nearly two-hundred pound swordfish after only twenty minutes on a private yacht off Catalina Island.

Churchill also toured many sites of business and industry, such as the oil fields of Alberta, slaughterhouses of Chicago, a steel mill in Pennsylvania, and New York’s famed Wall Street, with the famous crash happening when Churchill was in town. He went briefly to Stamford, Connecticut, for the Army-Yale college football game and loved his time touring Civil War battlefields in Virginia, the part of the US he thought more like England than any other. He especially enjoyed his visit to Louis B. Mayer’s MGM movie lot at Culver City, where he got on well with Charlie Chaplin.

Although this was not a political trip, Churchill did call at the White House for a brief meeting with President Herbert Hoover and visiting Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald. He argued that a key difference between Britain and the US was the former was slow to accept new things, while the latter embraced them with open arms.

For all the pleasantness of the journey, Churchill hated the American prohibition of alcohol as dangerous to liberty, indicating that the US was a land of “intolerant idealism” (217). The fact that contraband alcohol from a broken bottle in one of his suitcases leaked on a train platform in California is more amusing now than it must have been at the time.

Tolppanen has done extensive original research to produce twenty well-written chapters with good endnotes and bibliography. There is also a nice selection of two dozen unnumbered black and white photographs, many from the Library of Congress or Canadian provincial archives, skillfully interspersed throughout the text.

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

Timothy Heppell, The Tories From Winston Churchill to David Cameron Bloomsbury, 216 pages, $104.50, Kindle $20.22

Review by William John Shepherd

A politics professor at Leeds University studies the postwar Tories in a book without illustrations and one of the most outrageous prices we have seen. Heppell offers a good index and an impressive bibliography, though readers should note the use of in-text references listed parenthetically, as opposed to standard footnotes or endnotes.
was an indifferent Leader of the Opposition, embittered by electoral defeat, diminished by old age and ill health, and distracted by his war memoirs. His younger deputies, Anthony Eden, Harold Macmillan, and R.A. Butler, provided the ideas and energy that allowed the party’s return to power in 1951. The thesis continues that Churchill’s problematic leadership was further compounded by his obsession to settle Cold War matters through a summit meeting with the Soviets and Americans, a plan viewed with little enthusiasm by anybody else. Finally, at age 80 in 1955, Churchill resigned, and the long-suffering Tories were free to move forward without his hindering influence.

Heppell’s book is not a Churchill polemic like so many other recent works, but it is blindly dismissive of his significant party leadership, ignoring the fact that Churchill was the leader who set the overall tone, delegated authority as needed, and made the big decisions, whether they worked out for good or for ill. This book is a useful and timely post-mortem on the Tory Party, but scant complement to Lord Blake’s erudite 1988 masterpiece The Conservative Party from Peel to Major.


Review by Richard A. McConnell

"The American unknown soldier who lies here did not give his life in the fields of France merely to defend his American home for the moment that was passing. He gave it that his family, his neighbors, and all his fellow Americans might live in peace in the days to come. His hope was not fulfilled."

These remarks, taken from President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s speech at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier shortly after the US invasion of North Africa in 1942, give insight into the kind of leader who piloted the United States through the Second World War.

Having served as Assistant Secretary of the Navy during the First World War, FDR was determined to learn from and avoid repeating the mistakes of that conflict. Nigel Hamilton provides an engaging description of how the President masterfully established relationships, built coalitions, and established the conditions for an enduring peace, all while grappling with what it means to be the Commander-in-Chief.

Hamilton describes the unique challenges FDR faced as he struggled to lead a democracy through world war. Drawing from speeches, official documents, and personal journals, Hamilton shows the reader not only what was provided for public consumption at the time, but also what key individuals were internalizing about unfolding events and relationships as they occurred.

No author, though, can write a book about FDR during World War II without detailing the President’s relationship with Winston Churchill. To say that their association was complex is an understatement. These two leaders were very different in their approaches to war. However, they were able to collaborate successfully and navigate their nations as well as the rest of the world through the struggle. Hamilton provides rich descriptions of this complex, sometimes tumultuous, nonetheless enduring comradeship. Interestingly, the partnership might have gone wrong from the start.

The Roosevelt-Churchill relationship faced serious challenges while drafting the Atlantic Charter in 1941. FDR was determined to set a cohesive azimuth for the wartime effort if America was to be involved. The resulting document was a masterpiece of international relations, military strategy, and democratic principles.

Because of FDR, if America entered the war it would do so setting the conditions for self-determination for all nations. Many of the Charter’s principles clearly bear the President’s fingerprints and resemble his famous Four Freedoms Speech. Hamilton describes how FDR managed to get these vital principles included, often over the objections of Churchill, who wished to maintain the colonial might of the British Empire. FDR set the stage for American involvement in World War II using a combination of diplomacy, charm, and political prowess.

The Mantle of Command is a compelling read describing one of the most gifted American leaders of the last century and how he addressed the myriad challenges of his time. Hamilton’s account of how FDR led the United States through the initial stages of World War II provides important lessons for leaders today. FDR understood that before inaugurating war, American presidents should be mindful of the desired outcome and remember that as the Commander-in-Chief they are responsible to the nation for that result.

President Roosevelt masterfully displayed that unique brand of leadership known as command. This book illustrates how civilian leaders in democracies must assume the mantle of command and lead their nations to outcomes commensurate with the values for which they stand.

Lt. Col. Richard A. McConnell (USA Ret.) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Army Tactics at the US Army Command and General Staff College.
Gregory Bell Smith, M.S., The American Ancestry of Sir Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill

Review by Richard Mastio

Winston Churchill wrote in 1948: “There is no doubt that it is around the family and the home that all the greatest virtues, the most dominating virtues of human society, are created, strengthened, and maintained.” In 1950 he posited: “Where does the family start? It starts with a young man falling in love with a girl. No superior alternative has yet been found!” These words, quoted in the first pages of this wonderful work, might just motivate you to research your own family’s history and lead to a connection with the Greatest Man of the last thousand years.

If you have ever wondered if you were related to Sir Winston, this is a book that you need in your library. It is a fascinating and well-researched monograph by a genealogy genius and author with superb skills.

As most Churchill buffs know, Sir Winston was half American; his mother, Jennie Jerome, was born in Brooklyn in 1854. Many of his near and distant relations in the United States were also people who made names for themselves. Should you want to know which US Presidents were cousins of Churchill, this book will tell you. Could it be that he “ratted” and “re-ratted” because his ancestry connected him with Democratic and Republican Presidents alike?

Which movie stars, film directors, playwright, television host, comedian, and inventor were cousins of Churchill will surprise you. Could his artistic and painting skills have been inherited from the “Father of American Painting,” Augustine Clement, his ancestor? Churchill’s relatives also included a US general, Revolutionary War hero, a Supreme Court justice, US vice president, and a civil rights leader.

If you have family roots in the original thirteen colonies, especially in New England, you may just find here a link of your own to Churchill. If your family dates back to the Mayflower landing or the second ship to land from England, the Fortune, you might indeed have a Churchill connection. You might also find a link if you have Quaker ancestors. But not all connections are ones to trumpet. Churchill’s relatives included a famous serial killer from Chicago and another who was accused of murder but acquitted. These might be your relatives too and suggest that under different circumstances Churchill might have become the Napoleon of crime!

Copies of this wonderful book are available direct from the author, Gregory B. Smith, for $25.00 postpaid in the US. Write to 154 West Spain, Villa T, Sonoma, CA 95476. For other countries, inquire for pricing and shipping costs to gbslist@comcast.net.

Richard Mastio is a member of The Churchill Centre living in Laramie, Wyoming.

Brian A. Dementi, Churchill & Eisenhower Together Again.

Review by David Freeman

This large, handsome, and lavishly illustrated new book brings together photographs and memories of Winston Churchill’s triumphant post-war visit to historic Williamsburg, Virginia, in the company of his wife and General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Churchill had just returned with President Truman from Fulton, Missouri, where he delivered the famous “Iron Curtain” speech. After a brief rest in Washington, Churchill set off by railway with his wife Clementine in the private coach of the President of the United States, bound for Richmond. Joining them was the victorious Supreme Commander Allied Forces Europe, Gen. Eisenhower. In the state capitol, Churchill and Eisenhower both addressed the Virginia General Assembly.

From Richmond the party made the one-hour train ride to Williamsburg, where Churchill and Ike were driven about the city in a horse-drawn carriage. At the Raleigh Tavern, the women in the party took tea in the Apollo Room, while the men assembled in the Tap Room for Scotch and soda. The capstone of the visit was a banquet at the Williamsburg Inn hosted by John D. Rockefeller III, whose father was responsible for the restoration of the famous colonial city.

The 12” x 9” dimensions of this book allow for the reproduction of the many beautiful black-and-white images taken by photographer Frank A. Dementi that recorded the visit. The text provides a complete account of every aspect of the tour and includes the memories of several Virginians who witnessed the events.

Kevin Donnelly, Taming the Black Dog. Australian eBook Publisher, 2013, 100 pages, $10.99 AUD. ISBN: 9781925029666

Review by Harry Atkinson

When asked to review this book, I felt apprehensive. I expected it to be another long-winded screed about depression and Churchill’s supposed struggles with his Black Dog. I was
surprised to find instead a short and thought-provoking autobiography about a man from less-than-normal beginnings struggling through life’s hardships and how this prepared him for an even greater challenge: dealing with the death of his son.

Dr. Kevin Donnelly graduated from La Trobe University in 1974 and has been teaching in Australia for the past 20 years. He is a controversial figure in Australian educational circles due to his ardent conservative values and belief that the Australian school system has been hijacked by leftists. Donnelly attributes his conservatism to growing up the son of an alcoholic father who belonged to the Australian Communist Party. Donnelly’s mother also suffered from alcoholism and was a victim of domestic violence.

The book was written as a guide to help others who are suffering with grief, loss and hardship—factors often associated with serious depression and illness. The author takes you on a journey through his life as a young boy, a teenager, a man, and finally through the unbearable pain of a grieving father.

The front cover implies that Sir Winston is a major figure in the book. This is not the case, although Donnelly subtly reminds the reader that Churchill influenced his decision to write and gave him the courage to speak about his own struggles with depression. “Churchill’s black dog might be an ever-present companion but, to admit as such does not deny that life continues and that happiness and fulfilment are still achievable” (10). Given the title, I expected more references to Churchill but now feel this would have upset the balance of the text and overshadowed the message that Donnelly tries to get across.

As a person who suffers from anxiety, I received a lot of fulfilment from reading this book. It increased my awareness of the ongoing struggles with which many people must cope. Unfortunately, mental issues that we have to overcome are often highly personal and private. This book highlights how important it is to discuss and communicate openly with the people you love, be they friends or family.

I was able to read Taming the Black Dog in just over two hours, a relief given the gloomy subject matter. At times I was so emotionally overwhelmed I needed to pause before continuing. But Donnelly does not linger and is quite forward in telling the reader how he felt and what he had to overcome.

I recommend this book to anyone looking for insight into dealing with life’s most difficult challenges. I give it 4 out of 5 stars.

Harry Atkinson serves in the Royal Australian Navy.

Thomas Kielinger, Winston Churchill, Der Späte Held.
C.H. Beck, 2015. €24.95

Review by Alan Watson

Thomas Kielinger has been doing his best to explain the British to the Germans since 1998, when he became the London correspondent of the powerful German newspaper Die Welt. He has now decided to explain the Churchill phenomenon to the Germans, a daring venture, since most Germans who know about Churchill focus entirely on his role in defying Hitler in 1940 and his subsequent leadership of Britain through the Second World War. A smaller number of them are aware of Winston Churchill’s Iron Curtain speech at Fulton, Missouri, and even fewer know of his speech six months later in Zurich, Switzerland, in which he startled his audience by calling for a partnership between France and Germany to lead Europe’s economic revival and moral regeneration.

Kielinger tells a much richer and more complex tale that embraces Churchill’s youth, his adventures as a journalist and a soldier—in particular as a lieutenant in the Fourth Hussars, his spectacular escape from imprisonment by the Boers in Pretoria, his early-established celebrity status, his entry into parliament, his time as a trade minister, and then his decisive role in the first two years of the First World War in charge of the Admiralty but culminating catastrophically in the Dardanelles Campaign.

One of the most dramatic photographs in the book shows Churchill watching army manoeuvres in Germany with the Kaiser in 1909, a picture few Germans will have seen. Kielinger is excellent on the continuity and the diversity of Churchill’s career up until that point and beyond, through the inter-war period, the Second World War, his return to 10 Downing Street—this time elected directly, his eventual retirement, and death in 1965.

All the diversity of that extraordinary career is to be found in this biography, but so too is Churchill’s prolific output as author and journalist, his unmatched command of the language, the solace he found in painting, and the luxuries that were always a feature of his life. As he said of himself, he was always satisfied with the best.

But Kielinger’s “red thread” throughout the book is Churchill’s self-expression. Charismatic and courageous, Churchill was also a victim of severe phases of depression, succumbing to what he called his “black dog” moods. Essentially an optimist, he was also a realist.
well aware of the terrible price that would have been imposed upon him and the British people had the Nazis occupied Britain.

Germans reading this elegant and vivid account of Churchill’s life will be brought into direct contact not only with the political giant who shaped history but also the human, and therefore vulnerable, man behind the legend.

Lord Watson of Richmond CBE FRTS is Chairman of CTN Communications.

Review by Patrizio Romano Giangreco

In Finest Hour 149 (Winter 2010–11), I reviewed a book, Il Carteggio Churchill-Mussolini, that deals with a supposed exchange of letters between the British Prime Minister and the Duce of Italian Fascism.

In recent years this topic has been subject to analyses, or rather rehashes, in various books and newspapers, despite the fact that no one has ever been able to produce anything but photographic reproductions and not the original letters.

My earlier review focused on the details seen in the photographs to show that all of the letters are undoubtedly fakes. That has not stopped Roberto Festorazzi from writing this new book that attempts to show the real reason for Winston Churchill’s visit to Italy in September 1945, soon after the end of the Second World War, was not to have a relaxing painting holiday but to recover his alleged correspondence with Mussolini.

Festorazzi focuses on what bags Mussolini took with him when rescued by the Germans after his fall in 1943 and imprisonment on Gran Sasso. He provides many details in an attempt to prove the existence of the letters, but it is very difficult to believe that Mussolini would still possess any papers or objects of his years in government after his capture and escape.

Since there is nothing further to add about the obviously forged letters, I prefer to focus on the strength of Festorazzi’s book, the detailed account of Churchill’s stay on the shores of Lake Como in the company of his daughter Sarah, his personal physician Lord Moran, and Sawyers his valet.

During this trip Churchill travelled as “Col. Warden,” his wartime travel moniker to hide his real identity. Churchill was the guest of Field Marshal Alexander, who tasked a handpicked group of officers and soldiers of the Fourth Hussars (Churchill’s old regiment) to assure the security of the Great Man.

Alexander proved the perfect host, which Churchill notes in his letters to his wife Clementine, describing the great care that the Field Marshal took of him at the Villa Le Rose during his stay.

Churchill devoted himself to his favorite hobby, painting, and—being particularly inspired by the beautiful lakeside views of Como and Lugano—produced a number of paintings.

Despite the doubtful “truth” of the letters affair, this book is somewhat better than the others dealing with the same issue, since it offers some fresh facts about Churchill’s Italian holiday. Festorazzi has turned up many interesting and amusing details about the recently-defeated Prime Minister’s sojourn through a charming region. The book also offers five hitherto unpublished pictures of Churchill’s daily travels as well as reproducing five of the canvases that Churchill painted during his stay. As yet, however, there is no translation into English.

Patrizio Romano Giangreco lives in Italy. He is grateful to Andrew Martin Garvey of the University of Turin and Italian Officers College for assistance in preparing this review.


Review by Antoine Capet

The “parallel lives” format is now a well-established one, after Alan Bullock’s pioneering Hitler and Stalin (1991) and Andrew Roberts’s Hitler and Churchill (2003). This book follows what we could call a Y-structure, with two separate branches merging into one. Thus, in Part I, “Churchill’s unhappy youth” (Chapter 1) is followed by “Stalin’s unhappy youth” (2); “Churchill’s unruly adventures” (3) by “Stalin’s unruly adventures” (5), and so on. It is in Part II that their paths start to converge, with “Churchill against the Bolsheviks” (1) and “Stalin’s irresistible rise” (2).

Finest Hour readers will not dis-
cover anything new about Churchill in the early chapters, which are based on familiar second-hand sources, though they may learn quite a few nauseating details about Stalin’s attitude to his numerous wives and lovers, the children who resulted, and the long list of former revolutionary associates whom he sent to their death. The real meat of the volume starts with the increasingly worrying question of how to deal with Hitler’s evident expansionist ambitions—there the preoccupations of the two begin to converge, but with radically different conclusions on the approach to adopt.

Frerejean is very good on how Churchill tried to befriend and warn Stalin, who had not understood Chamberlain’s lesson that one could never trust Hitler. However, “there’s none so deaf as those who will not hear,” Frerejean convincingly argues. There is also excellent coverage of what after all had to be one of the central passages of the book, the Moscow Conference of August 1942: the first meeting between the two men. The text here is largely derived from the relevant chapter, “The Ogre in his Den,” in Martin Gilbert’s Road to Victory, 1941–1945. One has to bear in mind that the late Sir Martin’s volumes of the Official Biography were never translated into French (only the first two volumes by Randolph)—so French readers now benefit from at least some of the first-hand testimonies included.

Frerejean’s treatment of the next meeting in Moscow in October 1944—with the notorious “percentages” agreement on Greece and the Balkans—are similar in that no new material is included, and likewise for Yalta. The author’s real personal intervention only appears in his choice of sources, which aim to show that Churchill had no choice over Poland, for instance, since Roosevelt played a double game: the wily President made sure that he did not alienate Polish Americans during the election campaign in 1944, but at the same time he was prepared for a sell-out to Stalin if this could induce him to declare a firm commitment to Soviet entry into the war against Japan. With his reelection secure, Roosevelt was no longer interested in the fate of the peoples of Europe—unlike Churchill, whose country however was much too weak to enable him to confront Stalin alone.

In the final months of the war and at Potsdam, Churchill is shown alternating between distrust and naiveté vis-à-vis Stalin, always depicted as the master manipulator. Unsurprisingly, the final chapters describe the widening gap between the two former wartime leaders, with an insistence on Stalin’s increasing ruthlessness, cruelty, and paranoia: the two branches of the Y are there again, diverging more than ever.

This is not a bad book, but I was often irritated by the lack of footnotes giving authority to the words attributed to Churchill, and we all know how many apocryphal “Churchill quotes” are around. Let us, however, end on a hilarious howler that would not, I suppose, have displeased the Great Man: when Frerejean mentions his slippers, he describes them as sporting the embroidered letters “WC.”


Review by Antoine Capet

This reissue in the budget-priced Tempus series of a collection of essays first published in 2011 is most welcome. The origin of the publication is a radio program on the highbrow public station France-Culture, which was broadcast in July 2010. The format was a series of debates between a number of British and French historians moderated by Pierre Assouline, a well-known media figure and author in France. I remember listening and am pleased to see that the book version forms a near-complete verbatim transcript of the discussions. The only additions are very useful footnotes, giving references to the books cited, and a general preface by the editor.

That preface offers a very short survey of the biographical literature with the not unexpected conclusion that it was the events of 1940 that “made” him. Most of Assouline’s introduction is rightly devoted to a re-assessment of Churchill’s standing in the world today. A very unusual—and most welcome—line of attack for what largely remains an intractable problem is that Assouline cites media other than books, film, radio, and television: he points to the success of unconventional ways of celebrating the Great Man, on Twitter, on Facebook, and a “Churchillisms” app for iPhone. In other words, interest in Churchill is not confined to older people.

The first dialogue, Naissance d’un chef (Birth of a Leader), is between Professors Robert Tombs of Cambridge and John Keiger of Salford. Both are British specialists of French history, and unsurprisingly their debate first revolved around the nature of Churchill’s francophilia. Tombs defines it as a form of romantic francophilia nurtured by both Napoleon and Charles Péguy. Asked by Assouline what their favorite speech was,
François Delpla, who has written due to Churchill’s inspiration. The invidious task of discussing Chassaigne of Bordeaux had Queen Mary, London, and Philippe Professors Julian Jackson of ability, but they agree that he was in a no-win situation. Yet the exchange of views becomes very lively and extremely enjoyable when they discuss the respective literary merits of these two soldiers by training, and they conclude by deploving that de Gaulle did not receive the Nobel Prize for literature which, they both argue, he deserved as much as Churchill.

The book concludes on Le Bilan (The Balance-Sheet), an evaluation of Churchill’s achievements by Professors Anthony Rowley of Sciences Po (Paris) and François Kersaudy of Paris I. Rowley starts with a mixed judgment: the British owe a lot to Churchill between 1939 and 1942, since in fact he saved their lives, but he has a poor record in home affairs and was a disaster in economic policy. Kersaudy makes the point that without Churchill, Lloyd George as Prime Minister and the Duke of Windsor as King would have made a deal with Hitler—and the population would have followed: hence Churchill’s unique role. Rowley cannot disagree more: there would have been a surge in the British population, because the enemies of the democratic institutions were only a tiny minority, unlike in France. In many ways, this is the most informative of all the chapters, since the two debaters alternately agree and disagree—but always with excellent (and sometimes agreeably surprising) arguments.

All in all, this small book is a little gem, by people who know their Churchill in and out, and is highly recommended to Finest Hour readers who seek a pleasant way of brushing up their French.
of Sunday, 13 May 1945 in which
he offered a summary of the main
events of the war and the situation
as he saw it after Germany’s defeat.

Another unsigned “Bulletin from
Abroad,” on 28 July 1945, comments
upon the Labour victory. “How
can one explain that M. Churchill’s
immense prestige was unable to
save his party from defeat?” it asks
without really giving an answer. The
Bulletin ends on a note which one
found again in January 2015, in the
large number of articles devoted to
the fiftieth anniversary of Churchill’s
death by the French media: “The
French will not see the great
statesman that was M. Churchill
leave without emotion. Admiring
this indomitable character which
inspired victory, they cannot forget
that in June 1940 he promised to
liberate their country and that he
kept his promise.”

The Fulton speech of 1946 is
covered in a retrospective article of
March 1991 which pays tribute to
Churchill’s foresight in outlining
the path which East-West relations
were to take for the next forty-three
years. But it concludes on what is
presented as a flaw in his reasoning,
when he did not see that by staking
almost everything on the “Special
Relationship” and keeping aloof
from European integration, Britain
would weaken its influence in the
world in the long run.

But the best piece, which
surpasses all, has to be the long obit-
uary by Mendès-France (a Deputy
with a distinguished war record
in the Resistance, briefly Prime
Minister in 1954–55) on 26 January
1965. Pierre Mendès-France, a stern
judge of politicians, only has glowing
praise for Churchill’s achievements:
“When one re-reads his instructions
and his official documents, in spite
of the historical distance, which
usually submits past opinions to a
cruel light, neither his perception
nor his energy is found wanting at
any time.”

This attractive collection is illus-
trated by well-chosen photographs
and complemented by a selection
of books and films in French, as well as
a list of websites. It makes essential
reading for anyone interested in the
worldwide perception of Churchill—
in this instance in France since 1945.
An incredible bargain at the price
and unreservedly recommended!

Antoine Capet teaches is Professor Emeritus of British
Studies at the University of Rouen.

James MacManus, Sleep in Peace
Tonight. St. Martin’s Press, 2014
$27.00, Book Club: $21.60

Portrayal of Churchill **½
Worth Reading ***

Review by Michael McMenamin

Did you enjoy Lynne Olsen’s
excellent book, Citizens of
London: The Americans Who
Stood with Britain in Its Darkest,
Finest Hour, about Edward R.
Murrow, Averell Harriman and US
Ambassador John Winant during
the Blitz? If you did and you like
historical fiction, then Sleep in Peace
Tonight is a book you will want to
read. The novel largely takes place
from January through December
1941 and is an evocative portrayal
of life in wartime London before
America entered the war. The main
character is FDR’s close aide Harry
Hopkins. The two were so close
that Hopkins actually lived in the
White House and was sent by FDR
to London to assess England’s ability
and willingness to fight.

Hopkins is charmed by Churchill
and, in due course, comes to be
strongly pro-English, assisted no
doubt by an affair with his beautiful
young driver thoughtfully supplied
by MI-5. Other historical
characters with major roles include Edward R.
Murrow, Eleanor Roosevelt, Cordell
Hull, and Brendan Bracken. I think
MacManus does them as well as he
does Hopkins, and that is pretty
good. So, why does his portrayal of
Churchill receive only 2 ½ stars?

All novelists, but historical
novelists in particular, have to
maintain verisimilitude throughout
their novels lest they destroy their
readers’ willing suspension of disbe-
lief. To Churchillians, getting details
right about the great man matters. If
nits do not bother you, skip the rest
of the review and buy the book. If
they do, read on.

Small nits include Churchill
drinking Bollinger in his bathtub
rather than Pol Roger (91). Another
says Churchill was taken as a young
boy with “his toy boats...that had
begun his fascination with the
Navy,” rather than toy soldiers and
a fascination with the army (103).
A third is that Churchill’s usual
breakfast included “a schooner of
dry sherry” with his eggs, bacon, and
kidneys, a myth that Cita Seltzer
debunks in Dinner with Churchill.
Also, the US had a Department of
War, not Defense, in 1941 (122); and
the Augusta in which FDR trav-
elled to Placentia Bay in 1941 was a
heavy cruiser, not a battleship.

Okay, these are small nits,
to be sure, but here is a howler
that destroyed verisimilitude for
me when it came to Churchill.
MacManus writes about FDR’s
impression of Churchill “after they
had first met at a dinner in London
in 1917. A real stinker, Roosevelt
had called him and with good reason.
Within minutes of being introduced,
the two men had clashed at the
dinner table, Churchill as the first sea lord, pulling rank on Roosevelt, an undersecretary for the navy, as he then was. Churchill had been at his bombastic worst” (144).

Where to begin? Apart from the “stinker” comment, for which the sole historical source is the diary of the notorious Anglophobe Joseph Kennedy, nothing else is accurate. The dinner was in the summer of 1918, not 1917. FDR was Assistant Secretary of the Navy, the second highest civilian in the Navy Department, not a mere undersecretary. Churchill was Minister of Munitions in 1917 and 1918, not First Lord of the Admiralty, from which he had been sacked in 1915. Of course, he never had been First Sea Lord, a military position. Finally, the Minister of Munitions, according to Roy Jenkins, was not “a great post,” as it was not in the War Cabinet. Combined with the disgrace of his sacking in 1915, Churchill had little or no rank to pull with FDR in 1918.

Novels are rated one to three stars on two questions: Is the portrayal of Churchill accurate and is the book worth reading? Michael McMenamin writes Finest Hour feature “Action This Day” and is a member of its editorial board. He and his son Patrick are co-authors of the award-winning Winston Churchill thriller series The DeValera Deception, The Parsifal Pursuit, and The Gemini Agenda, set during Churchill’s Wilderness Years, 1929–1939.

Jonathan Smith, The Churchill Secret KBO. Little Brown, 208 pages

Review by Robert Courts

This novel tells the story of the little-known crisis that started in June 1953, when the seventy-eight-year-old Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill, suffered a major stroke while entertaining an Italian delegation at Downing Street. Anthony Eden, the heir presumptive, was at the time undergoing major surgery in the United States, leaving the United Kingdom effectively rudderless.

That Churchill not only managed to recover from this stroke but also to return to front-line politics by making his speech at the Conservative party conference in November of the same year—almost without anyone realising anything was amiss—is indeed remarkable.

Jonathan Smith dramatises and explains this story, starting with the fateful dinner, where immediately we meet the core cast: Jock Colville, Lord Moran, and, of course, Clementine. We see this unlikely group work together to spirit the stricken Prime Minister away to Chartwell and effectively conspire to keep the nation ignorant of the news.

Smith is most successful at bringing alive the main characters: personal physician Lord Moran’s prickly defensiveness, and Clementine’s belief in her titanic husband mixed with nervous concern for his welfare. Above all is a lively illustration of what Churchill must have been like at this point in his life: aged, infirm, infuriating, and magnetic, while vulnerable and defiant at the same time.

Where Smith scores less highly is in dramatic narrative. The true drama of the story lies not really with Churchill himself, but with those who conspired to keep his illness secret. Yet, Smith mentions only briefly the crucial meeting at Chartwell between Colville, the faithful Private Secretary, and the three newspaper barons: Beaverbrook, Bracken, and Camrose.

Naturally, Smith focuses on Churchill himself. But the problem with building a novel around the recovery of an aged stroke-patient is that it is—of necessity—a slow read. Smith’s solution is to introduce a fictional character, Nurse Appleyard, who assists Churchill with his recovery while forming a friendship. This enables Smith to have Churchill conversing with a person rather than engaging in an internal stream-of-consciousness. However, there are long passages of Churchillian wandering in which the patient recites tracks from the “greatest hits” of his phraseology; these do not always ring true.

This is an enjoyable novel, even if it does not quite catch fire. It commits no major factual errors, perpetuates no myths, and brings its hero’s extraordinary story to a new audience in a pleasant and readable way. It is a welcome addition to the canon.

Robert Courts is a barrister and committee member of The Churchill Centre UK.
“Leadership Matters”

On Tuesday, 21 April, at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City, The Churchill Centre presented the 2015 Churchill Leadership Award to former United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. She was introduced by Churchill Centre Chairman Laurence Geller and former British Foreign Secretary David Miliband. American journalist Tom Brokaw acted as Master of Ceremonies. We produce her speech in full.

I am deeply moved to be given an award named for a leader whom I have always revered, by an organization that has done so much to promote his legacy here in the United States and around the world. I am also delighted to be in the presence this evening of Randolph Churchill, Edwina Sandys, and so many other friends and supporters of the Centre—including David Miliband. David, thank you for your remarks, and for your tireless efforts on behalf of the world’s refugees. I am proud to call you my friend.

The size of tonight’s crowd reminds me of the time that Winston Churchill was asked, “Doesn’t it thrill you to know that every time you make a speech, the hall is packed to overflowing?” “It’s quite flattering,” Churchill replied, “but whenever I feel this way, I always remember that if instead of making a speech I was being hanged, the crowd would be twice as big.”

I approach this evening with a similar feeling of humility, mindful that the main reason you all are here tonight is the chance to feel the spirit of one of history’s true icons. The person I am referring to, of course, is Tom Brokaw.

I am also keenly aware that we gather tonight in the midst of a close election contest in the UK, and what is now known as presidential announcement season here in the United States. Which brings to mind another great observation of Churchill’s, this one about American politics: “I could never run for President of the United States,” he once said, “all that handshaking of people I didn’t give a damn about would kill me.”

His candor and gentility aside, Churchill remains a leader of unparalleled accomplishment in war and peace—a figure whose words and deeds, we can be certain, will still be recalled centuries from now.

For my part, I have always felt as if I grew up with Churchill, because my earliest memories are of London and the British countryside during World War II. I remember bomb shelters, blackout curtains, and being taken by my parents to the seashore despite the massive steel barriers erected to foil enemy attempts to invade. My family and I were in England because Churchill’s government was playing host to the Czechoslovak government in exile, whose cause my father served. So we saw first-hand how he rallied his countrymen to unite against the Nazi darkness, endure the Blitz, and find space for the continent’s refugee children.

As a very young girl, I also vividly recall Churchill’s stirring wartime oratory. I remember especially the impact it had on my parents, who could draw strength
from Churchill’s pledge to the people of Czechoslovakia, in the dark days of 1940, that their “hour of deliverance will come.”

My father later wrote about the importance of Churchill in his book on the history of twentieth century Czechoslovakia—citing his messages of reassurance to Prague and his recognition of the government-in-exile as two important moments for the Czechoslovak resistance.

My parent’s admiration for Churchill was, of course, rooted in his fierce opposition to the Munich agreement. And indeed, they raised me to firmly believe that my native country had been betrayed by its Western allies. It has always been axiomatic in my mind that evil had to be opposed forcefully because it could not be appeased.

A question I think about more often now, however, is whether the lessons of Munich have been misinterpreted by leaders who lack Churchill’s vision. To be sure, it is vitally important for countries to live up to their treaty obligations, especially with small nations, and it was without question a tragic mistake to be naïve about Hitler. We must always be ready to confront anyone who tries to run roughshod over the rights of others.

But at the same time, we should be careful about assuming that the lessons of any one past event will apply perfectly in the future. Half a century ago, analogies to Hitler and Munich were used to justify the Vietnam War.

The truth is, we seldom make peace or negotiate with our friends, and we simply cannot exclude diplomatic compromise from our toolkit if we hope to make progress in responding to today’s threats.

So we should understand that not every situation is Munich—even as we always bear its broader lessons in mind. And having spent a considerable amount of time studying this period in history, I would suggest that there are three lessons in particular that are especially relevant today.

The first is simple: leadership matters.

As we enter election season, I disagree completely when people shrug their shoulders and say: all politicians are the same. If we could have replaced Neville Chamberlain with Winston Churchill or substituted almost anyone for Hitler before World War II, we could have saved tens of millions of people.

A second lesson is that we must balance restraint with resolve in international affairs.

Too often, our policy options are boiled down to a choice between appeasement and intervention. And throughout our history the United States has tended to move from one extreme to another—depending on whether we were tired of war or feeling vulnerable, as we did after 9/11.

In reality, our response to threats must be more sophisticated. We should not be too eager to embrace the use of military force, but neither should we be so averse to it that we lose a vital tool to protect our interests. We do have to care about people in faraway places with unpronounceable names.

The third and final lesson I would draw is that democracies must work together, and that America in particular must be engaged as a world leader. In the 1930s, the countries that opposed Hitler failed to coordinate effectively, and the United States was effectively absent from the international arena. But thanks to the leadership of Winston Churchill and his partnership with President Roosevelt, our nations joined forces and acted as a true alliance—yielding a victory that would have been impossible for any nation to achieve on their own.

Following World War II, there were questions about whether the United States would retreat from the world stage, but Winston Churchill and others argued forcefully that the time had come for America to assume the mantle of international leadership. In one memorable speech, he said that the great power amassed by the United States “imposed on the American people a duty which cannot be rejected. With opportunities comes responsibility.” Churchill said those words on March 15, 1946—and he said them in this very room.

Almost seventy years later, for all that has changed, I remain as convinced as ever that Americans have a unique responsibility in world affairs—one that cannot be rejected. We remain the indispensable nation—the only nation with the power to shape history, and the values to do so in the direction most of the world would prefer to go: towards justice, freedom, and progress for all. But there is nothing in the word “indispensable” that means going it alone.

We must stay engaged with our allies and friends—especially those across the Atlantic—in doing the hard work of fighting tyranny in all its forms. After all, that is the very cause that drove our hero, Winston Churchill, to live the remarkable life that he did.

So let me end by saying how grateful I am that there are people and organizations today committed to preserving his legacy and upholding the values he held dear. I am truly thrilled and honored to be associated with these efforts, and I once again thank the Winston Churchill Centre for this incredible award.

Photo Courtesy: Don Pollard
This portrait of Sir Winston Churchill by noted artist Basia Hamilton will be auctioned at this year’s International Churchill Conference. Basia married the great nephew of Churchill’s good friend Gen. Sir Ian Hamilton, who commanded British troops at Gallipoli. She has painted many members of the Royal Family and the Churchill family. In 2009 she created this portrait of Sir Winston using pastels on board. The dimensions are 23”X25”.