Churchill and Europe

Views of Churchill from
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FROM THE EDITOR

Churchill and Europe

The subject has never been more relevant. During the campaign in the United Kingdom this past spring to decide whether the nation should remain in the European Union or depart after more than forty years as a member, voices on both sides of the “Brexit” debate invoked the spirit and words of Sir Winston Churchill. The theme of this issue, however, was chosen to commemorate an event from the past: the seventieth anniversary of Churchill’s call for “a kind of United States of Europe” made in Zurich on 19 September 1946.

This issue looks not at what people in the English-speaking world make of Churchill’s views on Europe but rather what people in Europe today make of Winston Churchill. Writing from the Netherlands, Felix Klos makes the important point that no one today can say what position Churchill might have taken in the United Kingdom’s recent referendum debate. What Klos does do is analyze the statements Churchill made about European unity—and Britain’s relationship to it—in the context of the times in which they were made.

Without doubt, France was the continental nation with which Churchill was most deeply involved and which he most loved. Antoine Capet charts the long history of this affaire de cœur. Churchill found Italy to be equally “paintacious” and relaxing, but the long years of Fascism made for dark times, as Patrizio Romano Giangreco and Andrew Martin Garvey explain. Werner Vogt shows how Switzerland was another nation for which Churchill developed a deep affection, and the Swiss people also did for him.

Only once did Churchill ever visit Iceland, Europe’s westernmost outpost, but the circumstances could not have been more dramatic or the impact more electric. Magnús Erlendsson, now eighty-five, remembers the summer day when he was just ten years old and personally witnessed the arrival of his nation’s most famous visitor.

From Portugal, Britain’s oldest ally, João Carlos Espada provides an outsider’s perspective on Churchill’s political philosophy and the government and legal traditions developed in Britain and imparted to the nations that emerged from its empire.

Even our book review section has a notably European perspective, including a new novel about Churchill and Charlie Chaplin written by an Austrian in German. The publication in English translation of the diaries of Ivan Maisky, Soviet ambassador in London from 1932 to 1943 provides an important new primary source for the Russian view of Churchill. And finally, we also have a fresh perspective on Churchill from Ireland, the European nation with a relationship to Britain that even now continues to be redefined.

David Freeman, July 2016
Finest Hour 172

The Duke and the Prime Minister
PALM BEACH, FLORIDA,—I enjoyed very much Aissa Wayne’s story about her father’s admiration for Winston Churchill. By coincidence I am working on a story about my late friend William Manchester as he recovered from combat wounds in Hawaii at the end of the Second World War. The tale may or may not involve John Wayne. I will keep you posted as research continues.
—Paul Reid, author of The Last Lion: Defender of the Realm

Allen Packwood OBE
The Queen’s Birthday Honours list included recognizing the work of the Director of the Churchill Archives Centre at Cambridge University with the award of Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. Well-deserved congratulations and praise swiftly followed.

Many Will Cheer
CROOKHAM HILL, KENT—Dear Allen, I was thrilled to see you have today received your very well deserved OBE. This is such good news. There will be so many who will cheer and be delighted you have been properly recognised. Many congratulations to you and all your team at the Archives. For me one of the many highlights was your leadership and commitment to Churchill 2015.
—Randolph Churchill

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY—
Dear Allen, I write to add my own delighted words to what will surely be a swelling chorus of acclaim and celebration. This is marvelous news, and the honour so richly deserved. I hope it will give you even more pleasure than it will give your many friends, of whom I am proud and privileged to count myself as one. Hurrah, bravo, and a million congratulations.
—Sir David Cannadine

Allen’s reply and splendid suggestion:
CAMBRIDGE—Thank you all so much. I think we all deserve honours and should institute the Churchill Order of the Golden Cigar.
—Allen Packwood
When David Cameron succumbed to domestic party political pressure in 2013 and announced his referendum on British membership in the European Union, he knew he was playing with fire. For Margaret Thatcher, citing Clement Attlee, the referendum was “a device of dictators and demagogues”; for Cameron’s Conservative Cabinet it proved a highly flammable political football.

It was hardly surprising that during the referendum campaign the nation more than once turned its eyes to its greatest son: Winston Churchill. Beating out the likes of William Shakespeare, Charles Darwin, and Isaac Newton in the BBC’s “Greatest Briton” poll, Winston Churchill has almost come to symbolize what it means to be British.

**A Long Tradition**

This March, Boris Johnson, then still the public face of Vote Leave, published his campaign manifesto to leave the European Union in *The Daily Telegraph*. In his conclusion, Johnson invoked the spirit of Churchill as the ultimate historical justification of the Brexit position. Two months later, Prime Minister David Cameron staked his own claim on Churchill, suggesting that he would have wanted Britain to remain in the EU.

Johnson and Cameron stand in a long tradition of conjuring up Churchill's ghost in British public discourse on Europe. In 1975, Margaret Thatcher appeared under Churchill’s statue in Parliament Square to campaign for “Remain” in the first “European” referendum. In 1996, in the midst of the single currency debate, Edward Heath, who took Britain into the European Economic Community, countered an avalanche of newspaper articles claiming Churchill for the skeptics, by arguing that Churchill would have wanted “Britain’s full participation in the European Union.”

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*Above: Churchill and daughter Mary at the Münsterhof in Zurich, Switzerland, 19 September 1946.*

By Felix Klos
More recently, UK Independence Party politicians spread a fabricated “quotation” implying Churchill would have joined them in voting out. Even Andrew Roberts, the eminent historian and ardent Brexiteer, was tempted to suggest ahead of the referendum that Churchill would never have supported “a bloated Brussels bureaucracy making 60% of British laws.”

So who can claim Churchill’s blessing beyond the grave? The simple answer is no one. It is clearly impossible to give Churchill a vote on the workings of the modern-day EU. We will never know what he would have voted or what he would have made of the current crisis in the West. But it is important and necessary to study Churchill’s European legacy as a way of understanding the origins of the post-war European project and Britain’s role in it.

Churchill’s Legacy

After the Second World War, Churchill became the greatest pioneer of the European ideal. “If I were 10 years younger,” he told his wife, “I might be the first President of the United States of Europe.”

In September 1946, warning his audience at the University of Zurich that he would “astonish” them, Churchill called upon France and Germany to enter into a partnership as the first step in building “a kind of United States of Europe.” Having learned the bitter lesson of a vicious cycle of nationalistic aggression that all but wiped out European civilisation in the twentieth century, Churchill underpinned his call for European unity with a warning against revanchism: “We must all turn our backs upon the horrors of the past. We must look to the future….There can be no revival of Europe without a spiritually great France and a spiritually great Germany.”

The speech, as Churchill foresaw, became a turning point in European history. The Zurich speech was followed by a flurry of activity fuelled by the willpower that was the hallmark of Churchill’s larger-than-life personality. In 1947, at the inauguration of his United Europe Movement, Churchill first stated his support for a United Europe “in which our country will play a decisive part.”

In the light of Cold War Soviet expansionism, Churchill was able to state publicly what he had come to believe even before the Zurich speech. At Zurich, Churchill had famously and ambiguously suggested that Great Britain, the United States and even Soviet Russia might all be “sponsors” of a united Europe. That one word has be-devilled Churchill scholars and European historians alike for decades.

Hoodwinking the Russians

The evidence, however, suggests that it was no more than a clever device to hoodwink the Russians. In order not to upset American and Soviet opinion so soon after the war, Churchill needed to make the Russians believe that they would not be challenged by a British-led European bloc. As he put it unambiguously to two high-ranking Swiss diplomats on the night before his speech: “I have preferred not to stress the point of British membership of the United States of Europe so as to leave to the other nations the task of inviting us. One must not give the impression that we wish to control Europe, even though it is clear that only Britain is capable today of guiding her properly. Or perhaps first you invite Russia, which will refuse, and in that case Britain will be able to join.”

At the famous 1948 Congress of Europe in The Hague, Churchill inspired a generation of European leaders with his message of reconciliation. The Congress, chaired and organised by Churchill, pressed the governments of Western Europe to create the Strasbourg Council of Europe, Europe’s first political institution. In Strasbourg, Churchill championed the European Convention on Human Rights and secured West Germany’s re-entry into the European family. He even launched the controversial idea of a European army in which Britain would take part.

Churchill published his original written programme for what he interchangeably called “the European Union” or “United Europe” in the The Daily Telegraph on 30 and 31 December 1946. Its title: “United Europe: One way to stop a new war.” In the two-part article, among other things, Churchill presented his expansive view of Britain’s global role as a partner in three great overlapping “circles”: the English-speaking world (the “special relationship” with America), the British Empire and Commonwealth, and the European Union.

Local Difficulties

There were, of course, severe difficulties holding Britain back from the realisation of this worldview. A debilitated domestic economy, surging independence movements in the colonies and increasing financial and political dependence on the United States were the primary pains of post-war Britain. The
country had neither the political clout nor the financial resources to play the role it felt entitled to after the heroics of the war. An acute awareness of these problems only strengthened Churchill in envisaging for his country a position of power at the heart of his three circles.

The important thing was the issue of compatibility. While he probably never intellectually reconciled the full implications for Britain of ever-closer union in Europe, Churchill certainly envisaged his country as a full partner in the post-war European “project.” He thought a marriage with Europe could complement Britain’s Commonwealth responsibilities and advocated a system that embraced both the European states and the dominions and territories associated with them. “For Britain to enter a European Union from which the Empire and Commonwealth would be excluded,” he told a European Movement rally in 1949, “would not only be impossible but would, in the eyes of Europe, enormously reduce the value of our participation.” The United States, much as it does today, thought of Britain as a European country and hoped the nation would lead the way in the gradual unification of the continent to which it belonged. Hence General Marshall’s explicit reference to Churchill’s European campaign as the source of inspiration for Marshall Aid.

Roadmap for Europe

In his 1946 Telegraph article, Churchill drew a roadmap for European integration that started with the creation of the Council of Europe. First, he argued, the Council of Europe would have to work steadily towards “the abolition or at least the diminution of tariff and customs barriers.” Second, it would “strive for economic harmony as a stepping-stone to economic unity.” Third, it would have to “reach some common form of defence.” And fourth, inseparably woven with all of the above, it would have to establish a common currency. European postage stamps, passports, and trading facilities would all flow out naturally from the “main channel” of the Council.

Notwithstanding his references to economic unity, what strikes the twenty-first-century reader is that Churchill’s case for Europe was essentially political. Churchill’s entire post-war campaign was based on the assumption that nation-states would relinquish some of their national sovereignty for the sake of unity. His case that small nation protectionism inevitably leads to political antagonism was determined by the central lesson of a life defined by two devastating European wars. On 27 June 1950, in one of his most moving contributions to parliamentary debate, Churchill invoked the sacrifice of past wars to justify the pooling of sovereignty in the present: “The soldier who laid down his life, the mother who wept for her son, and the wife who lost her husband, got inspiration or comfort, and felt a sense of being linked with the universal and eternal by the fact that we fought for what was precious not only for ourselves but for mankind. The Conservative and Liberal parties declare that national sovereignty is not inviolable, and that it may be resolutely diminished for the sake of all the men in all the lands finding their way home together.”

To be sure, Churchill did write in a 1930 article for the American Saturday Evening Post, when the British Empire was still flourishing and before there was an immediate and obvious demand for Union which the war helped to create, that Britain would stand aloof from a federal Europe: “interested and associated, but not absorbed.” He never believed, as evidenced by his lack of initiative when returned to No. 10 in 1951, that Britain could become an ordinary member of a federal union.

Le plan français

Unfortunately for Churchill and his younger Europeanist protégés, most prominently among them his son-in-law Duncan Sandys and Harold Macmillan, ordinary membership of a federal union was exactly what was on the table when the French grew frustrated with the slow working methods of the Council of Europe, rode the wave of Churchill’s campaign,
and seized the initiative by proposing the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community and the European Defence Community. The plans perverted Churchill’s call for an “organic union” of European states in which Britain could take part. And while he was furious that the sitting Labour Government refused to consider even negotiating about the terms of British participation in the European Coal and Steel Community, Churchill himself never succeeded in winning the continentals back for his case of gradualism.

All of that does nothing to change the fact that in Churchill’s post-war vision for a European Union, partly formed and moulded in the context of the emerging Cold War, Britain played an integral part. “I do not agree that the solution to our problem is to create a Europe excluding Britain,” he wrote in December 1949. “British participation is essential to the success of a European Union. It is impossible to say at the moment what form this union will ultimately take, but I am sure that the next immediate step is to develop and strengthen by every means in our power the new Council of Europe.” For Churchill the only way to achieve political and economic union was to let the Council of Europe grow organically into something much more than the platform of European opinion it was in 1949. Step by step. Little by little.

During his second premiership, Churchill did little to fight his party and foreign minister Anthony Eden on a newly-defined Tory European policy that kept Britain out of the European institutions emerging alongside the Council of Europe. And it took Churchill just a few weeks after his return to No. 10 to reiterate in a cabinet memorandum that he had never supported British membership in an exclusive federal union. For Churchill’s Britain, so soon after the war, the world was much bigger than Europe alone.

**Last Thoughts**

By 1957, however, Churchill started to regret his lack of enthusiasm for the continental plans. In 1962, when Prime Minister Harold Macmillan’s Britain felt ready to join the European Economic Community, as the EU was then called, Churchill was hospitalized and unable to comment. Field Marshal Montgomery, however, after visiting the patient, boldly stated to the press that Churchill opposed the application, a deliberate misrepresentation of an old and sick man’s views. In response, Churchill’s secretary, Anthony Montague Browne, without consulting anyone, “released to the press a statement of WSC’s views on the subject that he had embodied in a private and unpublished letter to his Constituency Chairman, Mrs Moss, in August 1961.” While rightly sceptical of the chances of success and careful to stress that no damage should be done to Commonwealth interests, the statement read: “I think that the Government are right to apply to join the European Economic Community, not because I am yet convinced that we shall be able to join, but because there appears to be no other way by which we can find out exactly whether the conditions of membership are acceptable.”

Whether modern Britons like it or not, the unity in Europe is to a great extent the evolved and still organically developing legacy of Winston Churchill.


### Endnotes

6. Ibid., p. 7485.
7. Ibid., p. 7382.
Strangely enough, we have a book on Churchill and Finland, but none on Churchill and France—only a number of articles and book chapters. Is it because of the sheer size of the task, considering the vast available sources, including Churchill’s own publications and private correspondence? Or is it because of the contradictory nature of much of this material, which makes it extremely difficult to master? Thirty years after Churchill’s death, Anthony Montague Browne gave us what is arguably the best short summary of Churchill’s attitude to France, from someone who accompanied him in many of his later travels to the country and heard what he had to say at first hand:

When it came to France, ambivalence was again evident. WSC’s love of France was sentimental and long-standing, based on personal experience in peace and war. His greatest heroine, or indeed hero for that matter, was Joan of Arc. But this did not deter him from taking a firm line with the French if he felt it was required, and he told me that after 1940, and their breaking of a solemn agreement not to sue for a separate peace, he never felt the same about them.

One might add that this ambivalence is often in evidence according as it is Churchill-the-statesman and impeccable British patriot speaking or Churchill-the-private-man and Francophile. When the interests of France coincided with those of Britain, all was well—there was no conflict of loyalties deep in his heart. But when he felt that they did not and that British interests were threatened, he naturally gave Britain priority. As “Jock” Colville later put it, “de Gaulle’s loyalty was…to France alone. Churchill’s…was merely to Britain alone.”
But when divergences inevitably occurred, Churchill somehow suffered from a sense of guilt towards France which made him irritable, often unpleasant with his pro-French British entourage (one may think here primarily of Anthony Eden) and his French interlocutors (there, de Gaulle springs to mind). But these inner conflicts only came at a late stage in his relations with France and the French—arguably at the time of the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. It seems useful, therefore, to distinguish between several stages in this long relationship, his physical presence in France running from 1883 to 1963—some eighty years, with more than a hundred visits: by far the largest number of his sojourns abroad.

**The Start of the Affair**

The first obvious connection with France is his parents’ wedding in the Anglican Chapel of the Paris Embassy on 15 April 1974—and the circumstances of his birth, officially "premature" on 30 November, allow us to conjecture that he was in fact conceived in Paris. His first stay in France took place in the summer of 1883, with his father, in Paris. Then, when he was 17, in 1891, he was sent to perfect his French at Versailles. It was a success in spite of his initial reticence. When he married Clementine in 1908, he in fact married another Francophile, who had spent some of her youth in Dieppe and spoke excellent French. It seems that it is with the Agadir Crisis in 1911 that the young politician became fully aware of the converging interests of Britain and France in thwarting German ambitions. At the Admiralty (1911–15) he was an active supporter of Anglo-French cooperation, and it is often forgotten that the decision to launch the joint Dardanelles expedition was taken with the enthusiastic agreement of the French naval staff. Admittedly, Churchill was to apportion part of the blame for the failure that followed to the priority given by French Army Generals to the Western Front, but he also deplored that the British Generals had not been more than lukewarm in their support.

When Churchill himself left for the Front in November 1915, serving with the British Expeditionary Force, he soon found himself on the best terms with the French Generals whom he met in the area: all his life he kept the Poilu helmet that General Marie Fayolle gave him. He was very impressed by what he saw of the French Army then—an opinion which was reinforced when he became Minister of Munitions in 1917, the reason being that this involved close collaboration with his French opposite number, Louis Loucheur, and frequent visits to France, including the front. The climax was reached in March 1918, when Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau took him on a tour of inspection of the battlefields, which included a stop at Marshal Ferdinand Foch’s Beauvais HQ on the way. The way Foch explained his plans—which turned out to be a complete success—made a profound impression on Churchill, who repeatedly and admiringly related the event in his later writings. The fullest account appeared in a magazine article of 1926, “A Day with Clemenceau,” which he reprinted in Thoughts and Adventures. For him, the Beauvais scene encapsulated the best of the two Frances: that of the old Roman Catholic, conservative tradition—the Ancien Régime—(Foch) and that of the Radical atheists of the Republic (Clemenceau). He was awed by the understanding between these two apparently irreconcilable camps before the German peril: both put country before party, and for him nothing could be nobler. Unfortunately, he drew the wrong conclusions from this day, believing that this reconciliation was definitive in the face of Germany, which misled him in the inter-war years.

**Le long week-end**

Churchill’s ambivalence was clearly visible at the time of Versailles and in the fifteen years or so which followed the Armistice. Churchill approved of Keynes’s reservations as expounded in The Economic Consequences of the Peace (1919), first, because he believed that Germany must be allowed to enjoy the prosperity to which it was entitled by the undeniable abilities of its people; and second, because pre-war Germany had been an excellent customer of Britain: the sooner its solvency was restored, the better for British export industries in dire need of orders after 1920. Thirdly, because France was no more to be permitted to dominate the Continent than any other country—this was of course a canon of British foreign policy. As Chancellor of the Exchequer, Churchill continued to cultivate his French contacts in high places, no British politician was better informed about opinion in French Government circles than he was.

Exactly when he became convinced that the Weimar Germans were using double talk—agreeing to pacts in favour of peace in public and making plans for
rebuilding their war potential in secret—will probably never be established. It is also extremely difficult to say when he finally chose the lesser of two evils—backing France at the risk of encouraging it to make fewer concessions to Germany. That danger seemed to be deliberately forgotten and ignored later in the 1920s, when Churchill wrote his articles in praise of the two great French leaders of the recent war, Foch (1929) and Clemenceau (1920)—the obvious intention being to emphasise the military and other virtues of France.

Churchill’s description of the double face of France and how it was symbolised by the contradictory, yet complementary personalities of the two joint saviours of the country in 1918, as he saw them, has never been bettered. Here, Churchill was clearly “more French than the French.” Indeed, his Francophilia made him seize every occasion to go to Paris, to the French Riviera and to the châteaux of his wealthy British and American friends in France, with many private visits supplementing his official talks in the 1920s.

Clemenceau and Foch both died in 1929, but during “the gathering storm” of the 1930s Churchill never forgot how “in the combination of these two men during the last year of war, the French people found in their service all the glories and the vital essences of Gaul.” This explains his famous cri de cœur in the Commons, “Thank God for the French Army,” on 23 March 1933, less than two months after Hitler had become Chancellor of Germany. For the young generation, it would be easy to misunderstand the tenor of what he says of the episode in his Memoirs: “I remember particularly the look of pain and aversion which I saw on the faces of Members in all parts of the House when I said ‘Thank God for the French Army.’” Of course the Members mentioned did not foresee the routing of that army in 1940—their “pain and aversion” was directed at Churchill’s plea for a renewal of the military alliance of the Great War.

Churchill’s isolation in British political circles during his “Wilderness Years” was paradoxically paralleled by his renewed presence among leading French statesmen. Once again, he availed himself of every opportunity to go to France, staying in luxury villas on the Riviera for pleasure or at the Paris Embassy for business. His visit to France in September 1936 is remarkable for the number of important people he met: Pierre-Étienne Flandin, General Joseph Georges, General Maurice Gamelin, now commander-in-chief of the French Army, who took him to the annual manoeuvres. After ten days’ interlude in London, he was back in Paris with Clemence on 24 September, and they had lunch with Flandin, Édouard Herriot, and Paul Reynaud—then a backbench Deputy of Paris. In the evening he delivered a major speech in English at the Théâtre des Ambassadeurs on the importance of Anglo-French cooperation in defence of Parliamentary Democracy and Western Civilisation, in contrast with “the doctrines of Comrade Trotsky and Dr Goebbels.”

One of the paradoxes is that Churchill’s good French friends were often from the Radical and Socialist Left, including Reynaud, Léon Blum, Édouard Daladier, and Georges Mandel. The list of people he met in Paris during another shorter trip in March, faithfully reported to the Foreign Office by Ambassador Sir Eric Phipps, is most impressive: Reynaud, Blum, Daladier, and Flandin again, along with Marie-René Léger and Joseph Paul-Boncour. “He wanted to see a Communist,” Phipps noted, “but I strongly advised against this and he abstained.” Thus it is clear that in those days after the recent Anschluss Churchill met all the men who were to count so much in l’heure tragique, to take up the French title of his discussion on June 1940 in The Second World War—with the exception of Pierre Laval, Philippe Pétain, and Maxime Weygand.
What did Churchill say to the French leaders? We know, thanks again to Phipps: “At nearly all the conversations at which I was present Churchill strongly advocated a close Anglo-French alliance, with staff talks… to join together in resisting German pressure.” In *The Gathering Storm*, Churchill mentions the friendly atmosphere with Blum and Reynaud. He also confirms his difficulties with Flandin, with whom he quarreled. And he suggests that the first cracks in his absolute confidence in the French army appeared when hearing Gamelin, in contrast with his views after the manoeuvres in September 1936. This was new because until then he had really been queasy only about the French Air Force. Churchill also left Paris uneasy about the political developments there. Thus it seems clear that by the spring of 1938, behind the façade of absolute faith in French military invincibility in case of attack—he knew of course that what was later called the Maginot mentality precluded any French invasion of Germany—his faith in France’s political will to fight and ability to renew the *Union sacrée* of the Great War was no longer unshakeable.

Yet one can notice how he was able to back the right horses in the long run—that is, the French leaders who emerged intact from the misdeeds and betrayals of defeatism, occupation, and collaboration. By September 1939, Churchill had broken with Flandin—and he never got along well with Laval or Pétain. On the other hand, by then his two best political friends in France were Blum and Reynaud. The latter may have been unequal to the situation in May–June 1940, but he was not a traitor—and the same could be said of Gamelin, and also of Georges.

*La seconde Guerre mondiale*

During the “Phoney War” period, which Churchill spent at the Admiralty, he naturally pleaded for the closest possible cooperation with France, as in 1914–18. When he became Prime Minister on 10 May—the day of the German offensive—he never envisaged that the French could sue for a separate armistice. Admittedly, certain choices made by the French from September 1939 did not please him, like the confirmation of Gamelin when he would have preferred Georges as Commander-in-Chief, or their refusal to fill the gap in the Ardennes between the Maginot Line and the Allied Armies. But he was soon to despair of the French and their lack of nerve before the German breakthrough at Sedan.

Hardly ten days after the real start of hostilities, on 19 May, his secretary “Jock” Colville noted in his diary how “Winston [was] expressing his distress at the plight of the French army.” On 25 May, Churchill asked the three Chiefs of Staff to examine the options left to Britain if France withdrew from the war. The Dunkirk evacuation was of course linked to their conclusions, like the thorny question—never finally elucidated—of the sending of additional fighter squadrons to France. Churchill uneasily navigated between his military advisers who wanted to keep them and the French who clamoured for more: in so doing, however, he gave excuses to the defeatists.

It seems that it was on 11 June, at Briare, that Churchill realised that all his efforts to keep France in the war had been in vain, particularly when his old friend General Georges intimated that suing for an armistice was inevitable. The confirmation came for Churchill on 13 June, at the Tours prefecture, wither he had come to attend what was to be the last Inter-Allied Council of this phase of the war. On the extraordinary affair of the Franco-British Union proposed on 15–16 June, “my first reaction was unfavourable,” he later wrote. In his memoirs, Churchill suggests that in these troubled days he unhesitatingly spotted de Gaulle as “the Constable of France.” Still, it would be an exaggeration to say that Churchill staked everything on de Gaulle, since he was careful to keep the possibility of arrangements with Vichy whenever they best served.
British interests. This infuriated de Gaulle, who is now seen as having been over-sensitive in his denunciation of Churchill’s supposed scheming in the Levant, both at the time and in his war memoirs.

Few historians today accept the Gaullist thesis that a Machiavellian Churchill tried to take advantage of France’s misfortune to further the interests of the British Empire. One has only to consider Churchill’s constant, undeniable efforts to establish the legitimacy of the Free French, first with a British public which was initially unconvinced if not outright hostile, then with the Soviets who were indifferent, and finally with the Americans who had long been negatively influenced by Anti-Gaullists that had taken refuge in their country. The most obdurate of Churchill’s critics cannot deny his efforts finally to obtain recognition of the Free French Government, a seat for France in the Security Council of the United Nations, and a Zone of Occupation in Germany.

Churchill’s inner conflict between his personal tenderness towards France and the harsh facts of Britain’s survival probably reached a climax at the time of the “Greek tragedy,” as he calls it, of Mers el-Kébir (Oran)—when he gave orders to the Royal Navy to open fire on French vessels in July 1940 in the face of Admiral Darlan’s refusal to yield, which was duly obeyed by his subordinates. Three elements were inextricably linked following this “hateful decision, the most unnatural and painful in which I have ever been concerned”: the enormous relief of warding off the threat of a German seizure of the French fleet, the self-satisfaction of hearing the Parliamentary Conservative Party applauding him unanimously for the first time, but also the realisation of the harm done by the death of so many French sailors to this Anglo-French alliance, which he had so assiduously cultivated since at least 1933. Admittedly, de Gaulle rose to the occasion and put the blame on Vichy’s blind obstinacy—but how many Frenchmen followed him in July 1940?

Churchill patiently strove to heal the wounds, beginning with his fine broadcast in French on 21 October, which few people were in fact able to understand, if only because the German jamming made inaudible the passages which his English accent did not render incomprehensible. Linking it with the Oran tragedy as a sub-text, he suggests that it led to a general forgiveness:

There is no doubt that this appeal went home to the hearts of millions of Frenchmen, and to this day [1949] I am reminded of it by men and women of all classes in France, who always treat me with the utmost kindness in spite of the hard things I had to do—sometimes to them—for our common salvation.

The great ceremony of reconciliation had to wait until the celebrations of 11 November 1944, when Churchill was the Guest of Honour, sitting on de Gaulle’s right on the official grandstand before being received by the Resistance authorities of the City of Paris who—knowing his taste for military memorabilia—presented him with a Nazi flag taken from the enemy during the Liberation street fights. The harsh constraints of Realpolitik re-emerged as the Nazi peril receded, but Churchill could rejoice once more that his personal feelings coincided with his country’s interests. As he explained at Yalta to President Roosevelt:

To give France a zone of occupation was by no means the end of the matter. Germany would surely rise again, and while the Americans could always go home the French had to live next door to her. A strong France was vital not only to Europe but to Great Britain. She alone could deny the rocket sites on her Channel coast and build up an army to contain the Germans.

This sounded very much like the “Thank you for the French Army” of 1933. At the same time, Churchill entrusted the great Francophile, Duff Cooper, with the Paris Embassy, which apparently never enjoyed a higher degree of Anglo-French goodwill.
In his first major post-war speech in France, at Metz on 14 July 1946, Churchill enthusiastically reaffirmed his faith in the Anglo-French alliance, in spite of the events of the 1940s. As Leader of the Opposition from 1945 to 1951, he never ceased to ask the Anglo-American allies, in the Commons, in North America, and during his European tours, to support the rapid recovery of France. Even more remarkable, in the course of his Zurich speech on “The United States of Europe” on 19 September 1946, he proposed for France no less than “the moral leadership of Europe.”

Those who subscribe to Freudian theories would argue that there was a dimension of self-interest, since a France back on its feet would enable him to resume his travels—in style—to the châteaux and villas which he loved on the French Riviera. He in fact lost no time in taking up his old habits, for he spent a week at Hendaye before going back to Potsdam in July 1945. This was the first of a long series of extended holidays in the South of France, including Monaco, which only ended in June 1963, when he became too weak to leave Britain.

In Paris, he was always received as a major statesman. In May 1947 he was awarded the Médaille militaire by the Prime Minister—dining in the evening with the President of the Republic, Vincent Auriol, a pre-war political friend. At Strasbourg on 15 August 1949, where he received the Freedom of the City, he gave a much- applauded speech to the crowds massed on its largest square. What remains most surprising today is that he scarcely slowed the pace of his visits to France when he was back in power in 1951. Yet, from a political point of view, one can perceive a wide difference between his insistence in Opposition on the restoration of France as a major power and his impatience with the French in 1951–55: by then, they had become an embarrassment for his obsessive pursuit of a summit of the Big Three.

With the burden of the premiership over, France became again only a source of pleasure and honours. Overlapping attractions drew him to it from 1955: his literary agent Emery Reves’s splendid villa, Aristotle Onassis’ yacht, and the Hôtel de Paris at Monte-Carlo. Both hosts organised sparkling dinner parties for him. On his way to the Riviera, he often stopped in Paris. On 6 November 1958 he was made Compagnon de la Libération by de Gaulle, who decided to reopen the Order for him. Churchill was obviously flattered—and on that occasion all the old quarrels were forgotten. Further meetings between the Churchills and the de Gaulles took place at the Nice prefecture and in London. A final source of satisfaction for the aging Churchill was seeing de Gaulle introduce long-overdue stability in French political life, his own political efforts having always suffered from the lack of continuity in government action under the Third and Fourth Republics. 

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Endnotes
4. Curiously he makes no mention of it in My Early Life (1930). He waited until his speech in Metz on 14 July 1946 to give details of how, on the Place de la Concorde, he “noticed that one of the monuments [that of Alsace-Lorraine] was covered with wreaths and crepe.” Randolph Churchill, ed., The Sinews of Peace: Post-War Speeches by the Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill (London: Cassell, 1948), p. 171. Randolph is also silent on this first-ever visit to France in the Official Biography.
5. See FH 169, pp. 6–9.
6. Now visible at Chartwell, together with the canvas by Lavery showing Churchill sporting it, “Winston Churchill, Wearing a French Poilu’s Steel Helmet.” A photograph is on line on the National Trust site: http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1102452.
10. Ibid., p. 291.
14. Ibid.
18. Ibid., p. 215.
20. Ibid., p. 512.
At age nineteen Winston Churchill first set foot in Italy in August 1893. He had passed into Italy via Switzerland, where he had gone as a reward for having passed the entrance exams to the Royal Military College, Sandhurst.

He was favorably impressed by the activity of the Milanese and even more so by the female company he kept. While staying in Milan he took boat trips, one of which was on Lake Maggiore to admire the extraordinary beauty of the Borromeo Islands and their lovely gardens: beauties he described in glowing terms in his letters home to his mother.

**Mussolini Encounters**

Some thirty-four years were to go by before Churchill returned to Italy in January 1927. By then he was Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Baldwin Government and had organized a trip to Europe with his wife Clementine and their children Randolph and Sarah. In Rome, Churchill, a guest of the British Ambassador in Italy, was enchanted by the Forum and, finding time to devote himself to his favorite hobby, did not fail to portray it in some paintings he executed on the spot.

During his 1927 stay, Churchill met Mussolini, then the undisputed leader of Fascist Italy. The two men exchanged visits at Palazzo Chigi, the seat of the Italian government, and the British Embassy. These were not their first meetings: their paths had previously crossed at the Locarno conference in 1925. In those years there were still good relations between the United Kingdom and Italy. Churchill expressed feelings of admiration towards the country and to Il Duce, both for his political action and as a person, views he clearly stated during a conference with the Italian press.

Churchill’s respect for Mussolini at this time was shared by most of the British political world and largely based on authentic fear of the spread of communism to Western Europe. In those years, in which the comet Hitler had yet to arise, Italy and its Duce, whose fascist regime—dictatorial though it was—had not reached the excesses of the 1930s or complete subservience to the Nazis, were seen as a mighty bastion against this danger. This British admiration for part of the Fascist model was, however, short-lived. Dissension followed Italy’s 1936 conquest of Ethiopia, which seemed to encroach on the specific interests of the British Empire and irreversibly spoiled the hitherto cordial relations between Churchill and Mussolini.

Churchill, then in his “wilderness years” and out of office, made efforts to stop Italy becoming embroiled in a colonial war, to the extent that he even used his personal friendship with Dino Grandi, then the Italian Ambassador to the Court of St. James’s and the future liquidator of the Fascist regime. An atypical Italian and Anglophile, Grandi had developed close friendships with members of the British establishment, but these relationships were not appreciated in Rome and led to his being recalled to Italy and appointed as Minister of Justice in order to isolate him from his English friends. Grandi’s friendship with Churchill, however, was to last for the rest of the Great Man’s life. At the time of Churchill’s funeral, Grandi published an article in the Italian magazine *Epoca* expressing his gratitude for the help Churchill provided that enabled Grandi and his family to flee Nazi-Fascist revenge and safely to reach Portugal in 1943, following Mussolini’s removal from office.

**The War Years**

After the war began and Churchill became prime minister, one of his first official acts, at the suggestion of Lord Halifax, was to appeal to Mussolini not to enter the war. Churchill wrote on 16 May 1940. His letter was full of pathos and recalled their previous meetings, words of peace, and good will expressed. Churchill invited Il Duce to consider that it
was not “too late to stop a river of blood from flowing between the British and Italian peoples.”¹

Mussolini replied with words of rancor about the sanctions imposed upon an Italy that only sought “a place in the sun.” Il Duce also stated that he had no intention of betraying the “Pact of Steel” with Hitler’s Germany.

These are the only letters Churchill and Mussolini ever exchanged, and the originals are now held in the their respective national archives. Of any other mysterious correspondence on which countless books and articles have been written, and on which several conjectures about their authenticity have been made, there is no trace whatsoever.²

Soon afterwards, Italy joined the war against the Allies, leading to a direct clash between the prime minister and the dictator. Mussolini never wasted an opportunity to attack and mock Churchill, even at a personal level. Likewise, Churchill pointed in his speeches to Mussolini as the only person responsible for dragging the Italian people into useless slaughter.

After Mussolini’s fall from power in July 1943 and the armistice with Italy of 8 September, Churchill dropped his stance of dislike and contempt for Italy that had characterized relations between the two countries throughout the conflict. He attributed to Italy relatively lower responsibility than that of Germany in having caused the catastrophe of war in Europe, and his aversion for Mussolini was less visceral than his loathing of Hitler. Churchill was also upset when he learned that Mussolini had been executed at the end of the war.

**Epic Journey**

Churchill often showed a physical attraction to danger. There was no way he could not be present on the front when he travelled to Italy during a crucial period in 1944. His stay lasted seventeen days, a period when he was constantly on the move and demonstrating a vitality and truly prodigious stamina for a man of his age and health.

On 11 August 1944 Churchill landed at Naples, accompanied by his staff, including the ubiquitous physician, Charles Wilson (later Lord Moran), his ADC Commander Charles “Tommy” Thompson, his private secretary Leslie Rowan, and the assistant private secretary John Peck. The diary of those days is impressive and can be relived chronologically:

**11 August:** Arrived in Naples and stayed at the Villa Rivalta on the shore of the splendid hill of Posillipo, guest of General Sir Henry Maitland “Jumbo” Wilson, Supreme Allied Commander Mediterranean.

**12 August:** At Caserta (Wilson’s HQ) he met Tito, leader of the Yugoslav resistance movement.
**13 August**: Visited the islands of Ischia and Capri, where he relaxed, swimming and sightseeing.


**15 August**: Embarked on the destroyer HMS Kimberly to observe the Allied landings on coast of the South of France (Operation ANVIL/DRAGOON).

**16 August**: Returned to Naples.

**17 August**: Departure for Cassino, where he met Gen. Sir Harold Alexander, commander of the XV Allied Army Group. Survey of the battlefields and a flight over Montecassino Abbey, after which he flew in General Alexander’s plane to Siena. He stayed at Villa Placidi, near Vignano, just outside Siena, where he spent two days working.

**19 August**: Flew to the Adriatic front and later met General Mark Clark, commander of the US Fifth Army, in Marina di Cecina. Churchill met RAF personnel. He later went to Castiglioncello to tour the front with General Clark. In the evening he dined with Generals Clark and Alexander in Cecina. At the end of a tiring day he flew back to Siena.

**21 August**: Flight to Rome with his staff in Gen. Alexander’s Dakota. He stayed at the British Embassy, where he met his son Randolph, Harold Macmillan (then Minister Resident in the Mediterranean), General Sir Alan Brooke, and Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Charles Portal.

**22 August**: Met Ivanoe Bonomi, the new head of the Italian government, and Marshal Pietro Badoglio, and Prince Humbert, Lieutenant General (or Regent) of the Kingdom of Italy; of the latter Churchill felt a sense of determination and assurance.

**23 August**: Met Pope Pius XII (Eugenio Pacelli) in the Vatican. While the papal audience had all the pomp and ceremony of the papal court, the meeting with the Pope took place in an atmosphere of great, almost intimate, cordiality. The Pope and the Prime Minister had first met when the then-Monsignor Pacelli was with the Pontifical delegation representing Pope Pius X at the coronation of King George V in 1911. Pius XII, who was not given to great sentimental outbursts, expressed his deep admiration for Churchill’s personal qualities, while Churchill hailed Pacelli as the greatest man of his time. Returned to Siena in the evening.

**25 August**: Alexander took him to the Adriatic front, where the British Eighth Army was operating under the command of General Oliver Leese.

**26 August**: At Loreto, where he met Polish General Wadislaw Anders, Churchill was right in the firing line from which Alexander launched a major attack against the Germans. Certain it would make Churchill happy, the general took him up to an observation point over the village of Montemaggiore, where he could follow the phases of the operation. At the end of the day he went to Jesi airport in the Marches to fly back to Naples and Villa Rivalta, where he met Clement Attlee and the US Secretary of State Cordell Hull.

**27 August**: Rear Admiral John A. V. Morse accompanied Churchill to Procida, the third charming island in the Bay of Naples.

**28 August**: Wrote a message of encouragement to the Italians, in which he expressed his feeling for the warm, friendly welcome he received wherever he went and recognized that they had regretfully fallen under fascist dictatorship. He stated that the British people were willing to help Italy return to the fold of free and peaceful nations. In the afternoon he left Naples to return to London.

The next time Churchill set foot in Italy was in October of the same year, when he visited Moscow and made a stop in Rome on his outbound flight and in Naples on his return. On the latter occasion he met the communist leader Palmiro Togliatti.

Churchill saw Italy as having a leading strategic and political role in thwarting Soviet expansionism in the West and had confidence that the Italian monarchy would be a factor of stabilization and political aggregation to ward off a communist revolution, the danger of which was very real and strongly felt in the period immediately following the end of the war. In this context,
Churchill supported the Badoglio Government, and, as he stated after meeting him in Rome, he had confidence in and a good opinion of Prince Humbert, who was still waiting to succeed his father King Victor Emmanuel III, then stubbornly refusing to abdicate. It was in such a context that Churchill reviewed his position on the unconditional surrender of Italy and agreed to consider Italy, in the last years of the war, as a co-belligerent country.

Post War

No longer prime minister, Churchill returned to Italy just over a year after his long visit to the Italian front. He arrived on 1 September 1945 in the Dakota made available to him by Sir Harold Alexander, who was his considerate host during his holiday. Churchill landed at Milan airport and headed towards Lake Como, where he stayed in Moltrasio until 19 September at Villa delle Rose, owned by Italian industrialist Guido Donegani.

In addition to the ever-present Lord Moran and butler Frank Sawyers, who had followed Churchill wherever he went over the course of the war, and secretary Kathleen Hill, Churchill was accompanied by his daughter Sarah and kept in touch with Clementine, who had stayed behind in London making arrangements for the Churchills’ new residence at 28 Hyde Park Gate.

Churchill dedicated his time to rest, good food, and his favorite hobby, painting, competing with Alexander, also a skilled painter, in portraying the charming lakeside villages. His daily trips were exclusively dedicated to searches for landscapes to portray on canvas. However, this stay near places that had seen the final defeat of Mussolini’s ephemeral Social Republic, so soon after the conclusion of the most catastrophic conflict that had struck Europe and the world, was immediately seen by the press, and others interested in fueling another Churchill legend, as a cover for one of Churchill’s alleged attempts to recover the phantom “correspondence” with Mussolini.

At the end of his stay on Lake Como, Churchill motored down to the eastern side of the Italian Riviera at Recco, where he stayed for a couple of days and then drove across to Monte Carlo.

Some four years later, on 25 July 1949, Churchill returned to another Italian lake, Lake Garda, and again the lake scenery was a valuable source of inspiration for his paintings. This time he was accompanied by his wife Clementine and attended by General Lord “Pug” Ismay and William “Bill” Deakin, his valued literary assistant in compiling his war memoirs.

In 1951, on the eve of his return to the leadership of His Majesty’s Government, Churchill took a short break in Venice. Churchill had further brief stays in Italy from time to time, when he was a frequent guest of Greek ship-owner Aristotle Onassis on his luxurious yacht Christina, something that gave Churchill immense pleasure in the last years of his life.

Arrivederci

In The Churchillians, Sir John Colville, one of Churchill’s most trusted secretaries, gives us one last funny anecdote about a fleeting visit across the border into Italy. In September 1954 Churchill was on the French Riviera, in Cap d’Ail, as a guest of his friend Lord Beaverbrook. Knowing Churchill’s passion for shellfish, Beaverbrook recommended a restaurant in nearby San Remo, where they served wonderful lobster.

One evening Churchill suggested a drive along the coast to San Remo with Colville and his wife Margaret. The trip was not exactly pleasant; the car was small with a blocked open window, and shortly after they had set out for San Remo a storm blew up. Once the party got to their destination with their Italian police escort, which had taken over from the French police at the frontier, they could not find the famous restaurant and had to fall back on a modest “trattoria,” where they sat down to a dinner of spaghetti and Chianti, decidedly not a wine suitable for Sir Winston’s refined palate. At that time, Italian wines had yet to reach his level of elegance. Had the Great Man been familiar with today’s Italian wines, he would certainly have welcomed them at his table and recognized yet another quality in a friendly country, as he always considered Italy to be.

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 article.

Endnotes

2. For the full story of the correspondence that never was, see FH 149 and 168.
Winston Churchill was my boyhood hero and has since become for me a lifelong character study in leadership and greatness. My early childhood was marked by the coming of the Second World War and culminated in seeing the great man in person when he visited Iceland on 16 August 1941. Since then I have read everything I could lay my hands on regarding him. First it was his memoir My Early Life, which was published in an Icelandic translation in 1944 that I read again and again. Later I read books on the conduct of the war, his friends, his foes, and the fiends that stirred up the whirlwind of 1939–45. I have done my best to promote his values and defend his legacy. From that seed the Churchill Club of Iceland was founded, now an affiliate of The Churchill Centre, which will continue to tend the flame.
The British Are Coming!

No one showed up for my ninth birthday! I had managed to coax my mother to permit me to invite all of my friends on my street, but none turned up. More perplexed than perturbed, I soon found out the reason why. That day turned out to be one of the most significant in the Second World War. It was 10 May 1940, the day Churchill became prime minister of the United Kingdom and the German offensive into Western Europe began. Most importantly for us in Iceland, however, it was the day the British showed up to occupy our island.

I had an inkling that the day would be unusual. My father had been woken up by the phone ringing at 5 AM that morning. His best friend was on the line, telling him that there were unusual activities in Reykjavik harbor. A few warships had anchored during the night, and there was the sound of warplanes flying over the city. I heard my father gasp: “My God, let’s hope it’s the British.” When his friend confirmed this to be the case, he was relieved and came into my room to relay the news to my mother and me.

My friends and I would go on spending that entire day jostling about the harbor watching the British come ashore unloading men and materiel. We had never witnessed anything so dramatic. So all interest in my birthday party vanished instantly as we and a crowd of intrigued Icelanders watched in awe the British occupying forces coming ashore in droves. Little did we know until later on of the unfolding of events in Europe that very same day.

Childhood on the Eve of War

In the years leading up to the breakout of the war, my interest and awareness of the tumultuous events unfolding grew steadily. Around the age of only five years old I started noticing the news about Mussolini’s aggression in Abyssinia (Ethiopia). I remember how my sympathies lay with the local population trying to stand up to the aggression, using only spears to fight against the Fascists, with their modern military equipment. Even to a young boy the contrast was obvious. This was not a fair fight.

At age seven or eight I began to take notice of the Spanish Civil War, with Franco’s Nationalist faction vying for power, which he eventually won in 1939. All this was high drama for a little boy just starting to understand the world around him. Then came 1 September 1939. I was then eight years old and had accompanied my mother, who was visiting a woman friend of hers. The radio was on in the background, and the announcer made the dramatic announcement that Germans had invaded Poland: “Warsaw is burning,” I recall him saying. I still recall vividly how those words sent cold shivers down my spine.

That clinched it for me. From that day onwards I read all five local daily newspapers, absorbing everything. My interest in the great drama unfolding was cemented, and I started noticing a new name taking center stage in the news, that of Winston S. Churchill who, on 3 September 1939, had just been made First Lord of the Admiralty for the second time in his life. “Winston was back,” as the British Navy learned quickly.

Churchill Visits Iceland

I did not quite understand it then, but Saturday, 16 August 1941 turned out to be a most remarkable day—probably one of the most memorable in my life. Although it started out as any other Saturday would, it was clear that something unusual was in the air. No one knew exactly what, but the daily Morgunbladid carried a small story on page 3 about a “fantastic” military parade that would take place later that day. The story also stated that something “interesting” would be happening at Reykjavik harbor around 10 AM that same morning and advised readers that they might want to be there to witness it.

I left my home that morning and met a friend already out and about. Since we knew something was going on, we were excited and went as quickly as we could down to the harbor. Already there was a great gathering of curious people not knowing what to expect. We watched as a destroyer came sailing into Reykjavik harbor and docked. And there on the deck, of all people, was Winston Churchill himself, waving to the crowd and wearing the jacket and cap of the Royal Yacht Squadron.

Churchill had just concluded the monumental Atlantic Conference with President Franklin Roosevelt off the shores of Newfoundland and decided to stop over for a day in Iceland on his way back home. The Americans were taking over the military protection of Iceland to free up British troops for direct engagement with the enemy. In a symbolic gesture, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr. served as his father’s emissary, accompanying Churchill as a show of support, although the US was then not yet directly involved in the war.
In July, Churchill had stated in the British Parliament: “The military occupation of Iceland by the forces of the United States is an event of first-rate political and strategic importance; in fact, it is one of the most important things that has happened since the war began….The seizure of Iceland by Hitler would be of great advantage to him in bringing pressure to bear both on Great Britain and the United States.”

As for his own visit to Iceland, Churchill wrote in his war memoirs: “We reached the island on Saturday morning, August 16 [on board HMS Prince of Wales], and anchored at Hvals Fjord [sic], from which we travelled to Reykjavik in a destroyer. On arrival at the port I received a remarkably warm and vociferous welcome from a large crowd, whose friendly greetings were repeated whenever our presence was recognized during our stay, culminating in scenes of great enthusiasm on our departure in the afternoon, to the accompaniment of such cheers and hand-clapping as have, I was assured, seldom been heard in the streets of Reykjavik.”

I can vouch that Churchill was right. Although I was only a ten-year-old boy, I realized something monumental was happening—at least to us, the inhabitants of Iceland. As soon as it was realized who the dignified visitor was, a jolt of enthusiasm passed through the crowd, which could not and did not want to stop cheering.

Churchill was greeted at the dock by the Prime Minister of Iceland, Hermann Jonasson, who accompanied him directly to Alþingi (the Althing), Iceland’s House of Parliament. At the capitol, Churchill met other members of government and Sveinn Björnsson, then the Regent of Iceland, who later became the nation’s first president upon the declaration of Icelandic independence on 17 June 1944. Churchill told Prime Minister Jonasson that if the Germans had been the first to occupy Iceland instead of the British, it would have been vital for the British to regain control of the island. That is how important Iceland’s geography was to the conduct of the war in the North Atlantic.

While I was waiting with my friends outside the Parliament building, a crowd started gathering. Suddenly one of my friends, whose father was working inside as a page, came bursting out of the building holding a half-smoked cigar in his hands. “Do you see this?! Do you see this?!” he repeated with unadulterated enthusiasm. He had managed to snatch the half-smoked cigar that Churchill had put away in one of the ashtrays indoors. It was like he had struck gold! It became a prized possession of his for many years to come and still is to the best of my knowledge.

**Speech from the Parliament Balcony**

Churchill’s visit to the Althing and the meeting with Iceland’s leadership lasted around half an hour, but before he left he, the Regent, and the prime minister stepped out onto the balcony of the Althing and faced a public square that was packed full of people who now fully realized the importance of the surprise visitor. Around noon, and after a brief introduction by the Icelandic prime minister, Churchill made a short speech. In the haste of his visit, no microphone had been made available, and, because Churchill was rather soft-spoken, his words could barely be heard. But his remarks survive both in the Icelandic newspapers and among his wartime speeches in. He said:

I am glad to have an opportunity to visit the nation which for so long has loved democracy and freedom. We, and later the Americans, have undertaken to keep war away from this country. But you will all realize that if we had not come others would. We will do all in our power to make sure that our presence here shall cause as little trouble as possible in the lives of the Icelanders. But at the moment your country is an important base for the protection of the rights of the nations. When the present strug-
ingle is over, we, and the Americans, will ensure that Iceland shall receive absolute freedom. We come to you as one cultured nation to another, and it is our aim that your culture in the past may be joined to your progress in the future as a free people. I have pleasure in wishing you happiness and good luck in time to come.¹

I saw Churchill speak and heard him as I was standing just beneath the balcony with all my friends among the crowd of thousands of Icelanders that had gathered outside. As Churchill left the building, we all cheered and waved. As it happens, a picture was taken that shows my face in the crowd. We were jubilant beyond belief. This was such an unreal turn of events that Winston Churchill had just turned up for a visit.

Churchill had a very busy day ahead of him. Although my friends and I did not have an opportunity to witness it, there was a great big military parade where Churchill reviewed many of the troops then stationed in Iceland. Afterwards he had lunch at the British Ambassador’s residence, then at the Höfði House where Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev would later come to meet at the Reykjavik summit in 1986. And it goes to show how long Churchill’s shadow is in history that even the term “summit,” I believe, was coined by Churchill in 1950 during the dark days of the Cold War.

**Churchill’s Icelandic “Claim”**

In his Second World War memoirs Churchill writes that after the review of the joint British and American forces and lunch with the ambassador “…I found the time to see the new airfields we were making, and also to visit the wonderful hot springs and the glasshouses they are made to serve. I thought immediately that they should also be used to heat Reykjavik and tried to further this plan even during the war. I am glad that it has now been carried out.”²

In full fairness, the idea of using hot water to heat up Reykjavik had been planned by the local authorities long before the outbreak of hostilities, but the war had postponed implementation. So the running joke in Iceland has been that Churchill at least convinced himself that he had given us the idea. But of course we forgive him, as we now know how and why Churchill’s interest in geothermal energy came about: because it was true and genuine.

During 1934 Churchill went through a lot of trouble and had to dig deep into his pockets to get heating installed for the outdoor pool at Chartwell, his country home in Kent. So when he saw the hot springs at Reykir during his visit to Iceland, all he could see was “free” hot water welling up from the ground—something for which he had had to pay a lot of hard-earned money. In hindsight, it is obvious why he was so interested and wanted to make sure we Icelanders took full advantage of our natural resources.

**Departure**

It was late Saturday afternoon when Churchill finally departed Reykjavik harbor on the same destroyer on which he arrived, now bound back for Hvalfjord where his transport, *Prince of Wales*, lay anchored. I of course was not going to miss seeing the great man one final time, so my friends and I had been waiting for him to show up. As he departed, the ships in the harbor whistled out V for Victory in Morse code. Later on we learned that when he returned to Hvalfjord, Churchill visited a few other ships and addressed the sailors onboard, assuring them of the importance of their duties. Hvalfjord, just north of Reykjavik, was playing and would continue to play a pivotal part as a deep-sea harbour for Allied merchant fleets in convoy to the Russian port of Murmansk, keeping the Soviets supplied until the Allies could open up a second front, as Stalin kept demanding until the D-Day invasion in 1944.

Winston Churchill’s one and only visit to my country was short, crowded, and unforgettable. As he promised, the Anglo-American occupation was only a temporary measure in the struggle for freedom. As he wished, and thanks in no small part to his efforts, we in Iceland prosper today as a free people.

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**Endnotes**

One of the challenges of writing proper history is telling what and why something happened within a broad enough context to avoid distortion-by-brevity.

A corrective, if I may, to Michael McMenamin’s telling of the Cape Town gold story in “Action This Day” (FH 171). It is a nice tale, but told in a short version tends to perpetuate two myths. Unfortunately, Winston Churchill’s war memoir contributed to the mythology. The first is the image of greedy Americans “squeezing” out all they could from what Churchill described as a “helpless debtor.” The second is the obvious assumption, by Churchill and at least two British official historians, that the proposal to ship gold across the Atlantic, risking U-boat attacks, came from those avaricious Americans.

As McMenamin described, Sir Frederick Phillips of the British Treasury (in Washington to discuss financial matters) “was told” on 23 December 1940 that Roosevelt had “arranged” for shipment of Cape Town gold to the United States. True enough, but the reality is that the suggestion of a gold transfer was not an American brainstorm. Rather it came four days earlier from Phillips himself, although he seems to have been surprised that his casual idea had been adopted and acted upon so quickly. As a Treasury official reported to the Department Secretary, Henry Morgenthau, Jr., “Phillips asked whether it would be possible for the Treasury...to buy gold situated in Australia or South Africa.” He even wondered if American warships might carry the gold.¹

The confusion comes from Churchill having printed in his memoir a draft message as having been sent to Roosevelt. In that draft Churchill expressed understandable concern that the transfer could have “embarrassing effects.” Defeatism was his greatest fear, and a forced transfer could be misinterpreted. But that phrasing was a come down from an angry earlier draft in which he wrote of a “sheriff collecting the last debts of a helpless debtor.”² There is little doubt that the drafts reflected the Prime Minister’s candid reaction to the Cape Town gold transfer proposal. But he wisely just sent FDR a message saying he agreed with the proposal, with a gentle caution that it would generate “varying reactions.”³

But why was the Cape Town gold transfer first proposed? Churchill noted in his war memoirs that the interval between November 1940 and passage of Lend-Lease in 1941 was marked by an acute stringency in dollars. Britain desperately needed to continue placing orders during that “interim finance” crisis, without having to pay up-front cash. But various pieces of US legislation required Britain to pay cash for war supplies. Moreover, Treasury Secretary Morgenthau had told Congressional...
questioners that the British would pay their bills. Hard as it may be to believe in hindsight, FDR and his advisers genuinely feared that so-called isolationists could stand in the way of aiding Britain and perhaps delay or defeat the Lend-Lease bill, then being written. As Churchill well knew, the Roosevelt administration had to deal with a persistent American image of an opulent Great Britain and its empire.

But Roosevelt and Morgenthau did not try to “collect the last assets of a helpless debtor.” They, and the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, rejected notions of acquiring British territories in the Caribbean. They forced transfer of assets from only one single British corporation. Why? In order to convince Congress that the Administration was not being conned by the British. The British understood the need for a “spectacular sale,” and offered up the Viscose Corporation of America. If the US was so very selfish and greedy, how could FDR have come up with Lend-Lease (just before the gold transfer proposal), which called for a full and unequivocal subsidy of Britain’s war needs? Bargaining over international trade policy and “imperial preference” came later, but Lend-Lease was, in Churchill’s words, “the most unsordid act in the whole of recorded history.”

As we all know, Churchill could be petty, picky, and petulant in his initial reactions to events (like all of us). But part of his greatness is that he did not remain wedded to those impulses, frequently listening to advice from his staff. Great Britain’s interests and security were his lifetime focus. He quickly and easily moved on from his private “helpless debtor” reaction to accepting the political exchange. Getting Lend-Lease was a far, far better thing than pouting about a transfer of Cape Town gold—a transfer that had been proposed by a British representative, whether or not Churchill knew it.


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Endnotes
Winston Churchill and William Shakespeare, the two greatest Britons, are now both celebrated in the Bard’s home of Stratford-upon-Avon, as the Stratford Armouries have become host to one of the finest collections of Churchilliana in existence. Jack Darrah gathered many of the best and rarest pieces celebrating Churchill’s life and is now pleased to see them permanently housed in a museum that preserves many elements of British military history.

Formerly housed at Bletchley Park, the Darrah/Harwood collection found a new home this year and opened to the public in late spring. Jack turned ninety-one last June, and his daughter Carol Harwood took on the sizable task of combing through the vast number of collectables to organize the exhibit at Stratford. Display cases take the visitor through the whole of Churchill’s life from childhood to the State Funeral in 1965. Among the rarities is one of the two ropes used to pull the caisson that bore Churchill’s casket through the streets of London.

Long known as the birthplace, childhood home, and burial site of William Shakespeare, Stratford-upon-Avon receives tens of thousands of visitors each year, who come not only to pay their respects to the world’s greatest dramatist but also to watch the plays performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company. Stratford has undergone a renaissance in recent years, starting with the magnificent remodeling of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre. New Place, the site of Shakespeare’s house, reopened this summer after significant enhancement. All this, combined with the introduction of the Darrah/Harwood collection, provides a splendid tribute to the Two Towers of English heritage.
Some of the displays of the Darrah/Harwood collection now on view in Stratford-upon-Avon.
It would be pretentious to assume that Switzerland played a major role in Winston Churchill’s life. Nevertheless he had many links to Switzerland, starting with his first travel abroad and finishing in the last year he lived, when his friend and supplier of his oil paints Willy Sax died shortly before him. For the Swiss people Churchill became a hero in 1940, and when he visited the city of Zurich on 19 September 1946 tens of thousands of people were cheering along the streets. The Swiss people’s gratitude was limitless. They made his drive through the city a triumphal parade. Never before and never after Churchill have the Swiss paid tribute to a great man like this.

A Most Tiring Mountain

Churchill’s first encounter with the Swiss and their homeland happened when he visited the country as a tourist in the summers of 1893 and 1894 together with his brother Jack and their tutor, Mr Little. These were in fact Churchill’s first travels abroad as a young man. He had a keen eye for the beauty of nature and wrote a series of enthusiastic letters to his mother, wherein he described the astounding scenery of the Swiss mountains and lakes but also some cities, which were to his liking. He even went so far as to climb Monte Rosa in the Valais, a substantial but by no means difficult mountain in the Canton of Valais. In a letter to his mother Churchill wrote:

While in Zermatt I climbed the Monte Rosa. It was not dangerous….More than 16 hours of continual walking. I was very proud & pleased to find I was able to do it and to come down very fresh. It is a most tiring mountain—mainly on account of the rarification of the air on the long snow slopes. There were several Sandhurst and Harrow boys at Zermatt and they climbed Dent Blanche—the Matterhorn and the Rothhorn—The most dangerous and difficult of Swiss mountains. It was very galling to me not to be able to do something too, particularly as they swaggered abominably of their achievements. I had to be content with toilsome but safe mountains. But another year I will come back and do the dangerous ones.¹

Churchill’s first experience of Switzerland was, however, not an entirely positive one. Swimming in Lac Léman, the Lake of Geneva, he feared for his life when, swimming in the middle of the lake, a thunderstorm developed. The rowboat he and a colleague had left unattended was blown away. Fortunately, young Churchill was a good swimmer and was able to reach the boat in a desperate effort. Happily, both young men survived the ordeal.

Alpine Retreat

The next series of encounters with Switzerland came about ten years later. In 1904, 1906, and 1910 Churchill spent long summer holidays in the villa of his friend and mentor Sir Ernest Cassell. Cassell loved the area of the Aletsch glacier and had a spacious country home constructed on the Riederalp, virtually in the middle of nowhere. Churchill as a young minister spent weeks on end there alone, or with his mother, and eventually with Clementine. He passed his days going for extended walks and hikes with Sir Ernest, reading, writing correspondences, and playing cards. Apparently Churchill, soon after he had arrived, had a clash with the local farmers, who drove their cattle past Cassel’s villa early in the morning. The young politician, who was not an early bird, was woken up and seriously annoyed by the sound of the bells and shouted at the peasants out of his bedroom window. Of course they did not understand a word, and Cassell had
to negotiate a feasible way forward. Assisted by some monetary compensation, the peasants agreed to stuff straw into the cowbells, when they walked past the villa so the VIP guest from London was able to sleep in. Apart from the cowbells, Churchill loved the place. In a letter to his mother he wrote:

I sleep like a top & have not ever felt in better health. Really it is a wonderful situation. A large comfortable 4 storied house—complete with baths, a French cook & private land & every luxury that would be expected in England—is perched on a gigantic mountain spur 7,000 feet high, and it’s the centre of a circle of the most glorious snow mountains in Switzerland. The air is buoyant and the weather has been delightful.2

Respected Minister

Given his early affinity with Switzerland, it is astonishing that Churchill was not to return for thirty-six years. An increasing workload, a growing family, and the outbreak of the First World War were probably the main reasons to leave the Alpine republic aside, to say nothing of the death of his mentor Sir Ernest Cassell in 1921. Being distant from Switzerland in miles, however, by no means meant being distant from the country in mind. Although Switzerland has no access to the sea, the country crossed Churchill’s mind every now and then even when he was First Lord of the Admiralty during the Great War.

As for the Swiss, Churchill for the political and economic elite became a known name in the twenties, when the foreign correspondents of *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (NZZ)—the country’s finest newspaper—reported about Churchill the minister, especially when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer. It is interesting to note that during Churchill’s “Wilderness Years” (1929–39) many of his articles and comments were printed in German translation by NZZ. When Hitler and the Nazis came to power in 1933, pressure on the German-speaking neighbouring countries began to rise accordingly. With the free press extinct in Germany, the Nazis hated the fact that in Switzerland there still was a free press, which reported in their language. During the Nazi era (1933–45) and especially during the Second World War, it was forbidden in Germany and punishable by death to read Swiss newspapers or to listen to Swiss radio stations. Seen in this light, it took courage for NZZ editor-in-chief Willy Bretscher to publish Churchill until the end of 1938. Bretscher had been a foreign correspondent in Berlin in the late 1920s, and as an experienced political observer he had seen the rise of the Nazi beast. By printing Churchill’s articles he expressed his own opinion. NZZ reported anything and everything Churchill did or said during the war. Every speech was announced, briefly summarised, printed in full length, and finally all the reactions were reported too. The Nazi threat continually sharpened the minds of the newspaper men in Falkenstrasse 11, Zurich, address of NZZ.

Switzerland at Bay

Obviously Switzerland was not at the centre of Churchill’s attention when he became Prime Minister in 1940. But after the fall of France, Switzerland was the only remaining democracy in the centre of Europe, Sweden playing the same role in the North of the continent. The position of Switzerland was particular, inasmuch as it was surrounded by hostile powers (Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy) or by countries under Nazi occupation (Austria and France). This fact meant that governing Switzerland was a constant balancing act between demonstrating the power and the will to resist by mobilising the army and guarding the borders on the one hand and being pragmatic enough in trade relations not to provoke a Nazi attack. Many studies written since 1945 have proven that Switzerland’s neutrality was a “biased neutrality” in the sense that the country delivered far more weapons and industrial goods which were relevant for the armament industry to Germany than to the United Kingdom. Why? Switzerland was vitally dependent on imported raw materials, having none of its own. And be it coal, steel, or oil—all imported goods needed by the Swiss economy passed through Germany.

So why was the country not invaded in the summer of 1940 when Germany had the necessary number of divisions ready next to the Swiss borders? There are a number of reasons. First, there was no immediate stra-
tectic necessity, given that thousands of tons of trans-
ports between Germany and Italy passed unhindered
through the Swiss railway infrastructure. Second, given
Hitler’s plan to attack the Soviet Union, there was no
need to bind important military forces for the occupa-
tion of Switzerland. Third, given Switzerland’s claim
to defend itself, the Swiss Army would have made all
efforts to inflict fatal damage to the crucial transport
infrastructure, particularly the bridges and railway tun-
nels on the North-South corridor upon which the Na-
zis heavily depended.

It is obvious that the policy of the Swiss govern-
ment to keep the country out of war and enter the con-
lict only if attacked has nothing heroic to it at first sight.
Nevertheless, Churchill had a considerable under-
standing for the Swiss position. In a letter to his Foreign
Secretary Anthony Eden, he wrote in December 1944:

Of all the neutrals, Switzerland has the greatest right
to distinction. She has been the sole international
force linking the hideously sundered nations and
ourselves. What does it matter whether she has
been able to give us the commercial advantage we
desire or has given too many to the Germans, to
keep herself alive? She has been a democratic state,
standing for freedom in self-defense among her
mountains, and in thought, in spite of race, largely
on our side.³

Another indication of Churchill’s sympathy towards
Switzerland is the fact that he strongly argued against a
breach of Switzerland’s neutrality, as suggested by So-
viet ruler Joseph Stalin at the Yalta conference. Stalin
foulmouthed the Swiss as “swine” and suggested the Al-
lies march over Swiss territory, if this were to speed up
their advance against Nazi Germany.⁴

“Let Europe Arise!”

A
fter the war a group of Swiss industrialists want-
ed to invite Churchill for a painting holiday on
the shores of Lake Geneva. A beautiful country
estate was rented for him, the villa Choisi at Bursinel.
The Churchills (Winston, Clementine, Mary, and their
entourage) arrived in Geneva on 23 August 1946, wel-
comed by cheering crowds at the airport. The first three
weeks were in fact a country retreat, interrupted only
by brief visits to Geneva, the International Committee
of the Red Cross, and Lausanne. Apart from painting
in the gardens, Churchill received visitors and was busy
with a huge correspondence. But, above all, he wanted
to make an important speech in Zurich, the last city on
his itinerary.

On his way to Zurich, Churchill first visited the
Swiss capital, Bern, where he was enthusiastically wel-
comed by tens of thousands of people. But this was only
a foretaste of what was going to happen in Zurich. As
Churchill drove through the city in an open limousine,
he was given a hero’s welcome. Again tens of thousands of people wanted to pay tribute to the great man, and since school was called off, thousands of pupils and students watched him drive past, waving their flags and throwing roses into his car. The warm welcome of the common people compensated for the fact that—for all kinds of silly reasons—the University of Zurich declined to award him an honorary doctorate.

Churchill’s Zurich speech, ending with the exhortation “Let Europe arise!” is certainly one of his most important post-war statements, on par with his address in Fulton, Missouri. What is interesting, though, is the fact that Churchill’s enthusiastic call for some sort of United States of Europe is put into perspective by his remark that Great Britain was going to be outside of this new construction, given that it had the Commonwealth and the “special relationship” with the United States of America.

The Painting Connection

A very strong connection between Churchill and Switzerland happened to be an artistic one. Soon after he started painting, he was introduced to the Swiss painter and adviser to wealthy collectors Charles Montag. Their first encounter in 1915 must have been memorable since Churchill showed Montag a few of his early paintings, which led Montag to the sardonic remark: “If you are as strong in politics as you are in painting, Europe is bust.” Churchill after a deep breath roared with laughter, and a life-long friendship began. It was in fact Montag who in 1945 was instrumental in convincing Churchill that he should accept an invitation for a painting holiday by the Swiss.

Another strong connection in the field of art evolved out of his visit to Zurich in 1946. For some years already, Churchill had painted with colours produced by Sax Farben in Urdorf near Zurich. Churchill wanted to meet the man whose oil and tempera colours he liked so much. So Willy Sax, the company owner, met him in the Grand Hotel Dolder on the day of the Zurich speech. Out of this encounter an astonishing friendship developed, which lasted until the two men died, Sax half a year before Churchill. Sax was invited to Chartwell several times, introduced Churchill to famous Swiss painters like Cuno Amiet, and spent painting holidays with Churchill in the South of France.

The Kitchen Connection

There is yet a further Swiss connection unknown to high politics. Winston and Clementine Churchill developed an affection for Swiss staff, especially after the Second World War. A considerable number of young ladies from Switzerland worked in Chartwell as cooks, kitchen aides, or maids to the master or the lady of the house. Apparently the Churchills liked the Swiss way of cooking and the discipline the “Swiss girls” had. The Prime Minister was especially touched when “the Swiss girls” Lilli Wyss (cook) and Liselotte Kaufmann (kitchen aide) surprised him with a basket of home-coloured Easter eggs in 1952.

Highest Respect for Churchill

To this day Winston Churchill is spoken about with the highest respect in Switzerland and not just by the fast-diminishing war generation. Young and middle-aged entrepreneurs often answer the question “With which historical figure would you like to dine?” with the reply, Winston Churchill. I am personally convinced that I owe my life to him. My father (1910–1994) served as an infantryman in Schwaderloch next to the River Rhine—in shooting distance to the German Reich. Most probably he would not have survived any Nazi invasion. Thank you Mr. Churchill!!

Werner Vogt wrote his PhD dissertation about Churchill’s pictures in Switzerland’s leading daily Neue Zürcher Zeitung. The author of numerous newspaper articles and books, his latest book, about Churchill’s relationship to Switzerland, is reviewed on page 41.

Endnotes

Winston Churchill was indeed the best representative of an old, well established and highly respectable political tradition: the Anglo-American political tradition of liberty under law. His political philosophy was not that of a maverick or an outsider, but that of a very old political tradition that goes back to Magna Carta, the Glorious Revolution, and the American Revolution.

This tradition, of limited government and of liberty under the law, has often been associated with a specific English political tradition, the conservative one.

Whether or not Churchill considered the principle of limited government as a specific conservative principle is a matter open to dispute. Churchill certainly expressed in a very telling manner his opposition to revolutionary plans to redesign a social order. But it seems to me that he associated this opposition to unlimited political power with a broad consensus between the two main British parliamentary families in the nineteenth century, the Conservatives and the Liberals.

This is particularly striking when he recalled the political philosophy of Sir Francis Mowatt, a top civil servant who had been private secretary to Gladstone and had served both under him and Disraeli, the two rival leading statesmen of Victorian England, one Liberal and the other Conservative. Sir Francis’s political philosophy, as described by Churchill, could hardly be more opposed to revolutionary and absolutist political projects:

He represented the complete triumphant Victorian view of economics and finance; strict parsimony; exact accounting, free imports whatever the rest of the world might do; suave, steady government; no wars; no flag-waving, just paying off debt and
reducing taxation and keeping out of scrapes, and for the rest—for trade, industry, agriculture, social life—laissez-faire and laissez-aller. Let the Government reduce itself and its demands upon the public to a minimum; let the nation live of its own; let social and industrial organisation take whatever course it pleased, subject to the law of the land and the Ten Commandments. Let the money fructify in the pockets of the people.¹

Churchill did not attribute to a single party or a single political family this sort of consensus on limited and small government. In fact, it seems fair to say that Churchill attributed this consensual view to the British people and, more broadly, to the English-speaking peoples. He saw in that consensual disposition an expression of a special attachment to liberty among the English-speaking peoples. This only can explain his persistent commitment to writing A History of the English-Speaking Peoples, which he started in 1932 but only managed to publish more than twenty years later, in 1956.

Writing to one of his literary assistants about the book in April 1939, Churchill said:

In the main, the theme is emerging of the growth of freedom and law, of the rights of the individual, of the subordination of the State to the fundamental and moral conceptions of an ever-comprehending community....Of these ideas the English-speaking peoples were the authors, then the trustees, and must now become the armed champions. Thus I condemn tyranny in whatever guise and from whatever quarter it presents itself. All of this of course has a current application.²

When the book finally came out, in 1956, Churchill wrote in the preface to the first of four volumes:

For the second time in the present century the British Empire and the United States have stood together facing the perils of war on the largest scale known among men, and since the cannons ceased to fire and the bombs to burst we have become more conscious of our common duty to the human race. Language, law, and the process by which we have come into being, already afforded a unique foundation for drawing together and portraying a concerted task. I thought when I began that such a unity might well notably influence the destiny of the world. Certainly I do not feel the need for this has diminished in any way in the twenty years that have passed.³

What were the political underpinnings of this “common duty to the human race”? Churchill presented them several times and at different occasions. One of the most striking still remains his broadcast to the United States on 8 August 1939:

It is curious how the English-speaking peoples have always had this horror of one-man power. They are quite ready to follow a leader for a time, as long as he is serviceable to them; but the idea of handing themselves over, lock, stock, and barrel, body and soul, to one man, and worshipping him as if he were an idol—that has always been odious to the whole theme and nature of our civilisation....Checks and counter-checks in the body politic, large devolution of State government, instruments and processes of free debate, frequent recurrence to first principles, the right of opposition to the most powerful governments, and above all ceaseless vigilance, have preserved, and will preserve, the broad characteristics of British and American institutions.⁴

This “horror of one-man power,” Churchill thought, went far back in the history of the English-speaking peoples. He thought it had had a significant expression, even though probably only half-understood at the time, in the Magna Carta of 1215:

No one at the time regarded the Charter as a final settlement of all outstanding issues, and its importance lay not in the details but in the broad affirmation of the principle that there is a law to which the Crown itself is subject. Rex non debet esse sub homine, sed sub Deo et lege—the king should not be below man, but below God and the law.⁵

Churchill then argued that, out of this concern with limited government which was at the heart of Magna Carta, a new concept emerged, that of accountability to Parliament:

If the Crown is to be kept within its due limits some broader basis of resistance must be found than the
ancient privileges of the nobility. About this time, in the middle of the thirteenth century we begin to have a new word, Parliament...In two or three generations a prudent statesman would no more think of governing England without a Parliament than without a king.\(^6\)

And then, as he approaches the conclusion of his preface to the first volume of *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, he states that

Unlike the remainder of Western Europe, which still retains the imprint and tradition of Roman law and the Roman system of government, the English-speaking peoples had at the close of the period covered by this volume achieved a body of legal and what might be called democratic principles, which survived the upheavals and onslaughts of the French and Spanish Empires. Parliament, trial by jury, local government by local citizens, and even the beginnings of a free Press, may be discerned, at any rate in primitive form, by the time Christopher Columbus set sail for the American continent.\(^7\)

**Enjoyment of Decentralised Ways of Life**

Churchill certainly perceived the British and the Anglo-American tradition of liberty as part of the broader Western civilisation. But he certainly also believed in the specificity of the political culture of the English-speaking peoples within the West. One of the crucial elements of this specificity, I submit, is the understanding of liberty and democracy as the result of a long, gradual evolutionary process. On the European continent, by contrast, democracy tends to be perceived mainly as a rather modern innovation that was brought about through a rupture with the past. This has created huge misunderstandings. A crucial one has been the acceptance of revolutions as normal, perhaps indispensable, instruments of change and of progress.

Nothing could be farther from Churchill’s political philosophy. He expressed his allergy to revolutions on innumerable occasions. One of the most inspiring was certainly his description of his father’s political views:

He [Lord Randolph Churchill] saw no reason why the old glories of Church and State, of King and country, should not be reconciled with modern democracy; or why the masses of working people should not become the chief defenders of those ancient institutions by which their liberties and progress had been achieved. It is this union of past and present, of tradition and progress, this golden chain, never yet broken, because no undue strain is placed upon it, that has constituted the peculiar merit and sovereign quality of English national life.\(^8\)

It is this commitment to the *golden chain* of gradual evolution that has allowed the British to perceive representative government limited by law mainly as a protection of their own decentralised ways of life. These ways of life exist as homes of real people, who have inherited them from their ancestors and will pass them on to their descendants. In this spontaneous dialogue between generations, these ways of life will gradually be adapted and made more convenient under new circumstances. But in no way can they or should they be redesigned by the arbitrary will, or an abstract scheme of perfection, of a single power. People, as individuals or persons, are there first, prior to governments, the main purpose of the latter being to protect the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, as the American Declaration of Independence of 1776 famously put it.

Curiously enough, it was along these lines that two great poets of the twentieth century defined the British cause in the Second World War. In 1943, John Betjeman said the following on the BBC:

I do not believe we are fighting for the privilege of living in a highly developed community of ants. That is what the Nazis want....For me, at any rate, England stands for the Church of England, eccentric incumbents, oil-lit churches, Women’s Institutes, modest village inns, arguments about cow parsley on the altar, the noise of mowing machines on Saturday afternoons, local newspapers, local auctions, the poetry of Tennyson, Crabbe, Hardy and Matthew Arnold, local talent, local concerts, a visit to the cinema, branch line trains, light railways, leaning on gates and looking across fields; for you it may stand for something else...something to do with Wolverhampton or dear old Swindon or wherever you happen to live.\(^9\)

In 1948 T. S. Eliot described English culture precisely as a “way of life” that includes “all the characteristic activities and interests of a people”:
Derby Day, Henley Regatta, Cowes, the twelfth of August, a cup final, the dog races, the pin table, the dart board, Wensleydale cheese, boiled cabbage cut into sections, beetroot in vinegar, nineteenth-century Gothic churches and the music of Elgar.\(^{10}\)

In this sense, Churchill was an interpreter of and heir to what he himself and many others have called “the English spirit.” This spirit is sceptical of dogmatic abstractions and of geometric plans to re-design decentralised institutions and traditions. As Churchill himself put it, it is a spirit of compromise and gradual evolution:

In England the political opinion of men and parties grows like a tree shading its trunk with its branches, shaped or twisted by the winds, rooted according to its strains, stunted by drought or maimed by storm....In our affairs as in those of Nature there are always frayed edges, border-lands, compromises, anomalies. Few lines are drawn that are not smudged.\(^{11}\)

The shortest and most inspiring description of this “English spirit” that I have come across was given by the eccentric Oxford historian A. L. Rowse. In a book precisely entitled The English Spirit, Rowse argued that the distinguished feature of this English spirit is the absence of “angst” or ennui:

At the core of the English spirit is happiness, a deep source of inner contentment with life, which explains the Englishman’s profoundest wish, to be left alone, and his willingness to leave others to their own devices so long as they do not trouble his repose.\(^{12}\)

As Bagehot and Oakeshott put it, this is a disposition to enjoy, an inner sentiment of happiness, of celebration of life and of the privilege to be able to enjoy a way of life that is of one’s own, that is familiar to one’s own, that was not imposed from without. It is a disposition of scepticism towards political adventures, intellectual fashions, schemes of perfection, and towards every sort of specialist who claims to know best how to organize our education, our culture and our spiritual life. In a word, it is a politics of imperfection, which intentionally does not aim at schemes of perfection, and which springs from a disposition to enjoy liberty—and to defend it at all costs.

This disposition to enjoy liberty, I submit, was at the heart of Churchill’s political temperament. The impact of this disposition on his political philosophy was best described by Martin Gilbert:

Here then were the three interwoven strands of Churchill’s political philosophy: “the appeasement of class bitterness” at home, “the appeasement of the fearful hatreds and antagonisms abroad,” and the defence of Parliamentary democracy and democratic values in Britain, in Western Europe, and in the territories under British rule or control. Whenever possible, the method to be used was conciliation, the route to be chosen was the middle way, the path of moderation. But where force alone could preserve the libertarian values, force would have to be used. It could only be a last resort—the horrors of war, and the very nature of democracy, ensured that—but in the last resort it might be necessary to defend those values by force of arms.\(^{13}\)

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Endnotes
2. Churchill to Maurice Ashley, 12 April 1939, CHAR 8/626, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge.
6. Ibid., p. xvii.
7. Ibid., p. xix.
8. Ibid., p. xix.
10. Ibid.
13. Gilbert, p. 82.
Lord Randolph was still in South Africa on business during the summer when he received Winston’s letter recounting, among other things, the abandoned factory windows he and some other Harrow students had broken. In his reply to Winston on 27 June, Lord Randolph made no reference to the broken windows. Rather, in distinct contrast to many of his critical letters to his son, he began this one in a cheery upbeat manner:

“You cannot think how pleased I was to get your interesting & well-written letter & to learn that you are getting on well. I understand that Mr Welldon thinks you will be able to pass your examination into the Army when the time comes. I hope it may be so, as it will be a tremendous pull for you ultimately.

He concluded the letter with “Ever yr most affte father” and added a p.s. that he was “doubtful about being able to bring home a ‘live’ antelope. What I meant was a head for my room.”

While Winston’s father was in South Africa, he persuaded his mother’s long-time lover Count Kinsky to take him to the Crystal Palace, where an exhibition was being put on for the German Emperor. It was apparent from his letter to his brother that Winston was quite impressed by Kinsky. A Fire Brigade drill past the Emperor was followed by dinner. “The head man said that he could not possibly give us a table,” Winston wrote, “but Count K. spoke German to him & it had a wonderful effect. Very tolerable dinner. Lots of champagne which pleased your loving brother very much.”

100 Years Ago
Summer 1916 • Age 41
“A Sitting Target”

Having taken the fig leaf offered by General Douglas Haig that he “could do so much more for the war effort by returning to Parliament and using his energy and skill to get conscription through the House,” Churchill did so in early May. Promptly upon arriving, he joined the debate on conscription. Prime Minister Asquith had proposed excluding Ireland from conscription in the wake of the Easter Rising in the previous month. The Unionist leader Sir Edward Carson and other Tories opposed the exclusion, and Churchill supported Carson. Churchill was a strong supporter of conscription, but if his support for Carson was an effort to curry favor with the Tories and ease their opposition to his once more holding a cabinet office, it failed. The Tories would not soon forget Churchill’s pre-war role as the Liberal Party’s chief spokesman for Irish Home Rule and the cutting, sarcastic attacks and accusations of treason he had lodged against them in the House.

Roy Jenkins wrote that Churchill nevertheless “went on speaking relentlessly” in the House. “Any debate which had anything to do with the general conduct of the war called forth a Churchill oration—and they were none of them short. They contained very good passages, showing that he had in no way lost his capacity to shine an original light on to an argument and to express it with eloquence.” Two of the issues on which he felt the strongest were (1) his opposition to any more futile offensives where the British did not have “a real, substantial preponderance of strength,” and (2) the distinction between the “trench population” who were sent back to the front after being wounded and those who never went anywhere near the front line, yet lived in almost complete safety receiving higher pay and more decorations. It was, Churchill said, “one of the grimmest class distinctions ever drawn in the world.”

Nonetheless, Jenkins believed Churchill did himself more political harm than good by his speeches in the House during May and wrote that there were three reasons for this. First, he spoke too often and this reduced his effect. Next, “feeling vulnerable,”
he was too keen to defend “every bit of his own record.” Finally, he was “too easy a sitting target” for those who wished to dismiss him with ad hominem attacks rather than answer Churchill’s arguments.

In early June, the Secretary of War, Lord Kitchener, drowned on his way to Russia when his ship struck a mine and went down with all hands. This affected Churchill negatively in two major ways. He and Sir Ian Hamilton were preparing evidence for the Royal Commission on the Dardanelles and, as Martin Gilbert writes, “were poring over Kitchener’s telegrams to Hamilton to ensure that no important document would be omitted with regard to Kitchener’s hesitations, changes of mind, and neglect of the Army once it was ashore.”

In short, they were going to place the major share of the blame for the failed campaign at Kitchener’s door and, in his defense, let him explain what he was doing with the Army at Gallipoli. Now, he would not be doing so. As Hamilton wrote bitterly, “the fact that he should have vanished at the very moment Winston and I were making an unanswerable case against him was one of those coups with which his career was crowded—he was not going to answer.” Kitchener’s death also meant that Britain would need a new Secretary of War, but Asquith was in no hurry to fill that position, assuming those duties himself for more than a month. When Lloyd George was appointed to the position on 7 July, Churchill briefly hoped he might takeover from the Welsh Wizard as Minister of Munitions. During this interim when Asquith was doing double duty, Haig prepared for and launched a new frontal offensive on the Somme, precisely the type of “futile offensive” Churchill had been arguing against.

On 10 May, the anniversary of Churchill becoming Prime Minister, insult was added to injury when the heaviest German air raid of 1941 destroyed the House of Commons. On 10 June, with summer approaching, Churchill received good news from Bletchley indicating Hitler was about to bite off more than he could chew: top secret German radio signals had been decoded giving the exact disposition of a large number of German Army units deployed all along the Soviet border. Even though Churchill promptly sent this information to Stalin the next day, the Red Army was still surprised on 22 June when German troops invaded the Soviet Union along a thousand-mile front.

Churchill addressed the nation in a broadcast the night of the invasion. “No one has been a more consistent opponent of Communism for the past twenty-five years. I will unsay no word that I have spoken about it. But this all fades away before the spectacle that is now unfolding. The past, with its crimes, its follies, and its tragedies flashes away….We have but one aim and one single irrevocable purpose. We are resolved to destroy Hitler and every vestige of the Nazi regime. From this, nothing will turn us—nothing…. Any man or state who fights against Nazidom will have our aid. Any man or state who marches with Hitler is our foe.”

Churchill was concerned that Russia might be inclined to conclude a separate peace with Germany and told Stalin in a telegram on 7 July that he had increased the strength of RAF bombing runs against Germany from 200 to 250 aircraft that night. “This will go on,” he told Stalin in a telegram. “Thus we hope to force Hitler to bring some of his air power to the West and gradually take some of the strain off you….We have only to go on fighting to beat the life out of these villains.” On 12 July, Stalin agreed to a mutual assistance pact with Britain where both parties agreed there would be no separate peace between either of them and Germany. While German bombing raids on Britain continued, the Royal Air Force did the same to Germany. In a speech on 14 July, Churchill said, “We will mete out to the Germans the measure, and more than the measure, they have meted out to us. You do your worst and we will do our best.”

In August, Churchill met Roosevelt at Placentia Bay in Newfoundland. While the “Atlantic Charter” declaration of democratic principles received the most publicity, there were a number of practical, immediate steps to which the United States agreed. The US would (1) give aid to Russia on a “gigantic scale” and coordinate that with Britain; (2) allocate even more ships to carry more bombers and tanks across the Atlantic for Britain; (3) provide a five-destroyer escort for every convoy to Britain; (4) deliver bombers to both Britain and West Africa, along with American pilots to provide training to British pilots; and (5) assume all naval patrol duties from North America to Iceland.

When he returned to England, Churchill told the War Cabinet that he had “established warm and deep personal relations” with President Roosevelt, who confided that all American warships accompanying convoys had been ordered to attack any German submarine that came within 300 miles of the convoy. FDR further “made it clear” to Churchill “that he would look for an ‘incident’ which would justify him in opening hostilities.”
Leader of the Pack

ISBN 978–1781313312

Review by John Campbell

The title of this book derives from the caption for the great cartoonist David Low’s *Evening Standard* drawing of 14 May 1940—four days after Churchill became Prime Minister—showing Churchill followed by leaders of the new government, all rolling up their sleeves and marching determinedly forward to start the job of winning the war.

Roger Hermiston’s bright idea is to take this image as the starting point for examining Britain’s war effort not as the achievement of one man—however indispensable his leadership—but rather as the product of the whole coalition government, comprising a remarkable collection of individuals from widely different backgrounds, working together, not always harmoniously but in the end effectively, for the common goal of victory. It is so obviously right that it is surprising that no one, so far as I know, has done it before. His book is skilfully constructed, with successive chapters focussing on the particular contribution of different players while maintaining a broad chronological narrative through the stages of the war, from the defiant unity of May 1940 through the dark days of 1941 to the turning of the tide in 1942 with the entry of the Russians and the Americans and the increasing strains within the coalition, as attention turned towards building the post-war world.

While Churchill was almost wholly taken up with military strategy, it was his colleagues who had to keep the forces supplied with manpower, weapons, and equipment and keep the nation fed and safe. The key figures were Ernest Bevin, the rough-hewn leader of the Transport and General Workers Union, whose appointment as Minister of Labour was the most striking symbol of national unity overcoming pre-war class antagonism; Herbert Morrison, Labour leader of the London County Council, who became Home Secretary with responsibility for protecting the populations of London and other cities from the effects of German bombing, as well as addressing sensitive questions of civil liberty in wartime; and the maverick Canadian newspaper proprietor Lord Beaverbrook, an old crony of Churchill’s who was initially put in charge of galvanising aircraft production in 1940–41 and later given a number of other tasks in which he repeatedly clashed with Bevin and Morrison but could usually rely on Churchill’s support.

As Minister of Food Lord Woolton—originally plain Fred Marquis, a successful Liverpool businessman—organised the “kitchen front,” which enabled the country to survive the real threat of starvation by German U-boats. Woolton earned the affectionate nickname “Uncle Fred” while imposing increasingly severe rationing and promoting spartan dietary expedients like Woolton Pie (“steak and kidney pie without the steak and kidney”).

Brendan Bracken, another unconventional protege of the prime minister, made a success of the tricky job of Minister of Information, which had earlier defeated the more distinguished John Reith and Duff Cooper, winning the trust of the newspapers and the BBC by giving them...
news instead of suppressing it. Among other unsung heroes, Hermiston also highlights the vital contribution of the only two women in the government: the Labour firebrand “Red Ellen” Wilkinson in the Home Office and the formidable Tory Florence Horsbrugh, who combined effectively with Morrison and Sir John Anderson to organise civil defence, provide bomb shelters, and look after the victims of bombing in London and all the other heavily-targeted cities around the country.

Curiously, the one character who still does not fully come to life is the ever-elusive Clement Attlee—the man who as deputy Prime Minister really ran the government, resolved disputes and held the coalition together while Churchill was preoccupied with the war, uninterested in domestic matters and frequently absent. Many colleagues testified to the quiet efficiency of Attlee’s chairmanship, compared with Churchill’s magnificent but often rambling monologues; but it is still not clear exactly how he exerted his unassuming authority. A rare glimpse is provided by a sharp letter he wrote Churchill in early 1945 protesting at his failure to read the papers before Cabinet:

More and more often you have not even read the note prepared for your guidance. Often half an hour or more is wasted in explaining what could have been grasped by two or three minutes reading of the document.

Churchill was said to be furious; but Clementine admired Attlee’s courage, and he eventually sent a chastened reply.

The sometimes tense relationships within the coalition make a good new slant on a familiar story, and Roger Hermiston tells it well.

John Campbell’s books include major biographies of F. E. Smith, Aneurin Bevan, Edward Heath, Margaret Thatcher, and most recently Roy Jenkins.

The Irish Perspective


Review by Robert McNamara

What did Winston Churchill really think about Irish nationalism and unionism? Indeed who is the real “Churchill” when it came to Ireland: an ardent home ruler or a diehard unionist Tory? Since he, at least on the surface, changed his mind often regarding both the conflicting communities in Ireland, it is rather difficult to identify a coherent thread, let alone an idée fixe.

Remarkably, this is only the fourth book on the subject out of the many thousands published about Churchill. Paul Bew covers the intersections of Churchill’s career and Ireland from the baby in the pram in the viceregal lodge in Phoenix Park to the 1950s. Mainly he negotiates a delicate balancing act mixing praise and criticism in his portrait. Unlike previous books written on the subject, Bew takes a moderate unionist perspective on some of the issues.

Irish opinions on Winston Churchill are mixed, to say the least. The accusations levelled against Churchill are long. He was the son of Lord Randolph, the man who played the “Orange Card.” He supported coercion and, most infamously, reprisals during the 1919–21 Troubles. He was a leading figure in the Treaty that partitioned Ireland and led to a bitter civil war in the south. He showed no respect for Irish neutrality (and by implication independence) during the Second World War. In a victory broadcast in May 1945, he launched a venomous attack on Irish neutrality, which Eamon de Valera defiantly rebuked in a famous reply.

Bew demonstrates that all of Churchill’s virtues and vices are present in his shifting views on Ireland. There is the cynical political opportunist. One of the interpretations offered is that Churchill’s shifts on Irish matters, from implacable unionist to home ruler to advocate of coercion, then conciliation of Sinn Fein strongly relate to what he thought was best for his political career, as he went from Conservative to Liberal and back again.

This shifting sense of not what was right for Ireland but what was right for Churchill explains, at least partially, why the great man could be foolish and wise, impetuous and cautious (sometimes all at the same
time) over Irish issues. There is also his magnanimity. He held no hard feelings towards Michael Collins or de Valera. Indeed, he seemed to like them a lot more than they liked him.

Bew argues that Churchill, on balance, was correct on the issue of Ulster. Churchill consistently emphasised the importance of unionist consent to the ending of partition. He also explains that Churchill, after the 1921 treaty negotiations, was clear that the Boundary Commission, on which many Northern Irish Catholics had relied for deliverance from what they understandably considered a sectarian state, was not going to deliver large tracts of Northern Ireland to the Irish Free State. Churchill envisaged Irish unity on his terms. He saw an Irish Free State, by demonstrating her political and economic stability and her loyal membership of the Commonwealth, as the key driver of a unification process.

Bew, however, points out that Churchill’s decision, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, to bankroll the finances of the Northern Ireland government in the 1920s created a fiscal dependency on the United Kingdom that no independent Irish government has ever had the resources to match and probably, inadvertently, strengthened the unionist case. Moreover, Churchill did not anticipate the revival of the political career of de Valera.

Bew also challenges some of the arguments put forward more recently that Irish neutrality helped Britain, notably intelligence cooperation and large amounts of army recruits and labour for the war effort. While this was undoubtedly true, he makes the case that it was outweighed by the lack of access to the Irish ports, which was a factor in the sinking of many British ships. Moreover, neutrality strengthened the case for partition. He also points out that Irish diplomats and politicians were at times ambiguous about the outcome of the war. Churchill’s famous offer of unity in June 1940, which is often dismissed by Irish historians, receives more favourable treatment here. Bew concludes that “the truth is that once such a discussion had begun in earnest between London and Dublin, it would have been very difficult to place limitations upon it. The momentum towards Irish unity would have been a very strong one.”

Bew’s moderate unionist and anti-neutrality perspective is likely to draw criticism from Irish nationalists. Nonetheless, this is an impressive work and the most significant overview of Churchill and the Irish that we have.

Robert McNamara teaches History at Ulster University and is the editor of The Churchills in Ireland 1660–1965: Connections and Controversies (Irish Academic Press, 2011).

Stalin’s Man in London

ISBN 978–0300180671

Review by D. Craig Horn

Winston Churchill once famously described Russia as “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.” Such terms can be equally applied to Ivan Mikhailovich Maisky, Soviet ambassador to London from 1932–43. Just think for a minute about the world-shaking events of those years. In every instance, Ivan Maisky chronicled them in fascinating detail.

The Maisky Diaries present not only a behind-the-curtain look at diplomacy and deception but also a story of intrigue and survival. Ambassador Maisky wormed himself into the innermost workings of the British government; he was the ultimate maker of friends in high places. His address book included private contacts at the highest levels of officialdom, journalism, diplomats, and political insiders. Through sheer ability and a cunning strategy, Maisky constantly put himself in the right place at the right time.

We are indebted to Professor Gabriel Gorodetsky for his incredible work that took more than ten years of exhaustive research and to Tatiana Sorokina and Oliver Ready for the translation that not only captures the sense and meaning of every word and phrase but also the literary talent of a unique and fascinating man. No other personal document of such breadth, value, and size has emerged from the Soviet Archives.

Maisky, an early revolutionary, who in 1919 at age thirty-five abandoned the Mensheviks to join the Bolsheviks, endeared himself to great men of the age: David Lloyd George, Anthony Eden, Joseph Kennedy, Leo Amery, Max Beaverbrook, Lady Astor (whom he described as “a crazy woman”), and Winston S. Churchill. Maisky’s first encounter with Churchill appears to have been in November 1934 at a royal wedding at Westminster Abbey. It was the first time that Maisky has been in a church in decades. Over the ensuing nine years, Maisky and Churchill met frequently to exchange views, swap stories...
and jokes and, most likely, consume a bit of alcohol.

Not the least of the intrigues in this marvelous work is how Maisky and his wife, Agniya, navigated the vagaries of the Soviet government that ebbed and flowed as a result of Stalin’s paranoia. Called back to Moscow during the height of the purges, Maisky delicately avoided falling into the abyss of an ongoing Soviet purge. But, in the end, his own success resulted in his demise as he was arrested, tried, and convicted, not for a political crime but an administrative one.

Despite having incredible access to British power, insight into western policy, and excellent intelligence value, Maisky was not always trusted by the Soviet leadership. He was wrong on most big issues: the opening of the elusive second front and the Nazi perfidy, to name but a few. Yet he understood the British and was able to protect the interests of his homeland.

The Maisky Diaries reveal a vast amount of new information about Churchill’s prewar and wartime musings; they contain many new anecdotes and witticisms, as well as an insight into what others were saying about Churchill. Maisky obviously held Churchill in high regard, and there are fascinating details of the many one-on-one meetings that the two had at familiar locations such as Chartwell, Chequers, and Number 10, as well as in Maisky’s private quarters in the Soviet Embassy in London. Their frequent encounters at social and political events from football games to funerals often resulted in sidebar conversations that revealed policy and personnel changes that are all chronicled in these diaries.

But, in the end, they both knew that when Maisky was summoned to Moscow in 1943, the termination of an era was at hand. The inherent insecurity of the Soviet leadership moved to checkmate its own best chess piece. Maisky was ever the best defender of the very same power that he knew to be his mortal enemy. Nevertheless, he remained confident in his own abilities; he knew well the art of walking the diplomatic tightrope.

The Maisky Diaries is an indispensable resource for historians, students, and researchers: a primer for the arts of statesmanship and international relations work from the vantage point of one who understood the game and whose instincts served him well. Make no mistake: this is not an easy read, but it is an important one.

Although Churchill is renowned as the British bulldog, Maisky was a bulldog of a different breed. These were men whose fortitude and dedication will stand forever as an example of loyalty to their cause.

D. Craig Horn is a former Russian linguist for the United States Air Force currently serving in the North Carolina General Assembly. He is chairman of the Churchill Society of North Carolina and serves on The Churchill Centre’s Board of Trustees.

Review by Jochen Burgtorf


If Winston Churchill’s 1946 “Sinews of Peace” address, delivered in Fulton, Missouri, drew international attention to the disheartening notion after the Second World War of an “iron curtain” coming down on eastern Europe due to the policies of the Soviet Union, then his “Let Europe Arise” speech, given in Zurich, Switzerland, later that same year, suggested an appropriate antidote: the United States of Europe, based on a partnership between France and Germany.

Werner Vogt’s **Winston Churchill und die Schweiz: Vom Monte Rosa zum Triumphzug durch Zürich** (“Winston Churchill and Switzerland: From Monte Rosa to the Triumphal Procession through Zurich”) places Churchill’s Zurich speech into a broad context and promises to go beyond Max Sauter’s 1976 dissertation by including Churchill’s early connections to Switzerland and, above all, the “human factor” (13). The latter is accomplished on the basis of oral histories conducted by Vogt with eyewitnesses and their descendants, including the son of Churchill’s physician in Switzerland and, above all, the “human factor” (13). The latter is accomplished on the basis of oral histories conducted by Vogt with eyewitnesses and their descendants, including the son of Churchill’s physician in Switzerland and the dining-car waiter who served Churchill on the Swiss “Red Arrow” train.

Vogt holds a doctoral degree (1996) from the University of Zurich for a dissertation on the image of Churchill between 1938
and 1946 in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Switzerland’s premier newspaper. His present volume is beautifully illustrated with more than 100 photographs. Intended for a wide audience, it does not employ any footnotes or endnotes. Following an introductory chapter that sketches Churchill’s life and career, Vogt turns to Churchill’s pre-1910 experiences in Switzerland, which include climbing Monte Rosa (at more than 15,000 feet, Europe’s second-highest mountain), almost drowning in Lake Geneva, and arguing with local shepherds in the canton of Valais over the—in Churchill’s opinion—undue early-morning noise made by cow bells.

Churchill’s interest in Switzerland after the First World War culminated in the somewhat regular publication of his opinion pieces on international politics in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* between 1936 and 1938. During the Second World War, Churchill acknowledged Switzerland’s attempts to remain neutral, while many Swiss, especially the editors-in-chief of several newspapers, saw Churchill as a beacon of hope against the threat of a German invasion. A short chapter is dedicated to Churchill’s painting instructor, the Swiss Charles Montag, whom he had met in 1915 and who was instrumental in bringing about Churchill’s 1946 visit to Switzerland. That visit is the subject of three full chapters.

The visit’s official program, we learn, was overloaded, perhaps to compensate for the inability of the University of Zurich’s faculty to find a consensus and bestow an honorary doctorate upon its prominent guest. The “Let Europe Arise” speech drew considerable international attention (as well as French criticism). However, it was the enthusiastic reception by the people of Zurich that made the visit an unprecedented event in Swiss history. According to Vogt, all of Zurich was “vollkommen aus dem Häuschen” (145), perhaps best—albeit somewhat atypically for the Swiss—translated as “completely gaga.”

The book concludes with chapters on Churchill’s friendship with Swiss artists and businessmen (especially paint manufacturer Willy Sax), and the memories of the “Swiss girls” employed at Chartwell.

Vogt emphasizes time and again that Churchill viewed Britain’s role with regard to post-war Europe as that of a godparent, not a parent, and that, to Churchill, Britain’s relationship with the Commonwealth came first, that with the US second, and the one with Europe third. He concludes that Switzerland’s position in modern Europe is quite “insular” and, thus, not dissimilar to that of Britain.

The book’s appendix contains the English text and German translation of Churchill’s Zurich speech (apparently as published by the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* in 1946), accompanied by photographs of the respective first pages of the original typescript and the typescript in Psalm-style format, intended to facilitate Churchill’s oratory. It is curious that the speech’s final phrase “Let Europe arise!” is translated as “Lassen Sie Europe entstehen!” (210/214). While the German verb “entstehen” is not incorrect, it is in this context a rather weak rendition of the English “arise,” and Churchill might have preferred “auferstehen” or “sich erheben.”

Considering that both anti-EU and pro-EU politicians in Britain routinely claim Churchill as one of their own, translating his speeches with the intent to capture their essence remains a tall order. Since *Winston Churchill und die Schweiz* is published under the auspices of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, the author’s obvious—and admittedly not unmerited—reverence for the paper’s longtime (1933–67) editor-in-chief Willy Bretscher comes as no surprise. Otherwise, Vogt’s book is not a hagiography: neither its Churchill nor its Switzerland is flawless, which is why, alongside the general readership, historians will appreciate this volume.

**Jochen Burgtorf** is professor of History and former chair of the History department at California State University, Fullerton. He is currently the President of the National History Honors Society.

**Everything Old Is New Again**


**Review by Mark Klobas**
In any argument for when was the lowest point of the Second World War for Great Britain, an excellent case can be made for February 1942. Though the entry of the United States into the conflict just two months before led Winston Churchill to exult that Britain’s victory was assured, the road to that triumph became costlier, and the result diminished because of Japan’s subsequent assault on Britain’s empire in Asia. Before that victory could be achieved, Britain would suffer a series of humiliating and tragic defeats, most dramatically and symbolically represented by the fall of the “eastern Gibraltar,” Singapore.

Adrian Stewart outlines the events of that mensis horribilis in this short book. His focus is on operations in three theaters: North Africa, where the overextended Eighth Army was driven back by Erwin Rommel’s Afrika Korps; the English Channel, where the German battlecruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau and the heavy cruiser Prinz Eugen evaded the combined efforts of the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force to destroy them; and Southeast Asia, where Japanese forces were in the midst of inflicting a series of defeats upon British, imperial, and allied forces on land, on sea, and in the air. Stewart traces much of the responsibility for this to Churchill’s decision the previous year to divert forces destined for Southeast Asia to Egypt. Buoyed, in Stewart’s view, by the recent success of Operation CRUSADER in rolling back Rommel’s forces to El Agheila in Libya, Churchill preferred to gamble on a victory in North Africa, instead of playing it safe by shoring up Britain’s military presence in the Far East.

A key element in the failure of this gamble was the poor guidance provided by the commander of British forces in the region, Claude Auchinleck. This highlights a recurring theme in Stewart’s book, as he emphasizes repeatedly the failure of leadership at the theater level. Just as Auchinleck receives the brunt of the criticism for the military debacle in North Africa, so too the explanation for the success of the “Channel dash” is credited in part to the lack of collaboration between the Admiralty and the RAF, while much of the blame for the deficiencies of the British military effort in Malaya and Burma is assigned to Archibald Wavell, who as Supreme Allied Commander in the theater was in charge of organizing a response to the Japanese offensives in the region. Yet this was just one component among many, for Stewart also notes that other factors, such as deficiencies in equipment, the logistical challenges posed by long distances, the disruption of supply lines by enemy forces, and a growing dispiritedness among soldiers as misfortune piled upon misfortune, combined to bring about this collective crisis.

Stewart’s description of these campaigns is both pointed and readable, yet his book suffers from a number of flaws. One is a lack of context, for while the author endeavors to provide background to the myriad events of that month, his effort is limited to military developments, with no consideration of the overall political or economic context in which the events took place. Consideration of the broader impact of the defeats Stewart describes is also absent, for there is no coverage of the public’s response in Britain to these events, nor is there any analysis of the role they played in the political discontent Churchill faced during that time. These are symptoms of what is the greatest problem with the book, which is the choice of sources Stewart uses in constructing his narrative. His bibliography is filled with several venerable titles about the war, with no reference to any primary source documents (even published sources such as the Companion Volumes to the Official Biography of Churchill are absent from it) or much of the modern secondary literature on the conflict. It is a classic case of a writer going into a room full of old books and walking out of it with a new one assembled from its contents. Because of this, while Stewart’s book can be recommended to readers new to the subject, those who have already read the classics upon which his efforts rest would be better advised to turn their attention elsewhere.

Mark Klobas teaches history at Scottsdale Community College in Arizona and hosts a podcast for the New Books Network.
Churchill as a Literary Character: WSC in Fiction

Linda Stoker, Churchill’s Shadow, Beswick and Beswick, 2015, 1114 KB, $7.57. ASIN: B0150XHGRG
Portrayal of Churchill *
Worth Reading **

ISBN: 978–1590061183
Portrayal of Churchill **
Worth Reading **

Review by Michael McMenamin

Novels are rated one to three stars on two questions: Is the portrayal of Churchill accurate, and is the book worth reading?

These are two very similar books, and I wanted to like them a lot more than I did. Both involve plots to assassinate Churchill. Churchill’s Shadow has Heinrich Himmler tasking Walter Schellenberg in July 1939 to assassinate Churchill when he visits the Duke of Windsor at his home on the French Riviera. Target Churchill has NKVD chief Lavrentiy Beria ordering the killing of Churchill in 1946, when he gives his famous Sinews of Peace speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri.

Linda Stoker is the great niece of Churchill’s bodyguard Walter Thompson, and the cover states that it is based on Thompson’s “secret memoirs.” Warren Adler, a long time mystery and thriller writer, is best known for his novel The War of the Roses, while James Humes has written several non-fiction books on Churchill.

The problem I had with both books was that I just could not buy into their underlying premise—and that is critical to any historical novel. The reader has to believe that the story could have happened, even though he knows it did not. It is called verisimilitude, the willing suspension of disbelief. And this reader does not believe that Hitler and Himmler, two months from invading Poland, would order the assassination of an out-of-power Churchill or that Himmler would say, “We cannot afford to miss this excellent opportunity to eliminate Herr Churchill before he causes us any more damage [emphasis added].” Similarly, I do not believe that Stalin and Beria would order an out-of-power Churchill killed simply because Stalin was “worried that Churchill will spread his lies and make us out to be devils” in his speech at Westminster College.

I am not going to tell you why I believe these two premises to be unrealistic. If you think them plausible, then you may well enjoy both books, which is why I gave them two out of a possible three “Worth Reading” stars.

Of the two books, the portrayal of Churchill in Target Churchill is much better than in Churchill’s Shadow, where the dialogue does not ring true. When a Secret Service agent tells Churchill that he has it “on the best authority” that “German agents will be waiting for you” at the Duke of Windsor’s villa and that “I advise you to return to England immediately,” Churchill does not ask any questions. Rather, he tells the agent “I will follow your advice with all haste.” Really? End his holiday just like that? Why not just avoid the Duke’s villa? Or at least ask the agent for the identity of this “best authority” and why the agent believes him?

In truth, Stoker’s Churchill would deserve two stars for her portrayal and the Adler and Humes Churchill three stars, but for one thing. They both gratuitously and inaccurately refer to Churchill’s “Black Dog.” For example, Stoker’s Churchill stops dictating for a “long 30 minutes,” and she writes that his secretary “had become familiar with his black dog depression days but this was different—worse [emphasis in original].” Really? Thirty minutes of silence is a symptom of depression? And speaking of worse, Adler and Humes write that Churchill “called these fits of melancholy his ‘black dog’—oppressive, deep depression that filled him with ennui and...
self-loathing.” Seriously? Black Dog meant Churchill was filled... with...self-loathing? Churchill, the man who thought himself a “glow worm”?

Mary Soames said on more than one occasion that she believed that some Churchill biographers made “rather too big a meal” of her father’s casual use of a term Victorian nannies used to describe their charges’ bad moods. Well, you can add novelists to that list as well, and that is why I docked them one star each for their Churchill portrayal. For the record, Churchill never suffered from clinical depression at any point in his life. Ever. Full stop. See “The Myth of the Black Dog” in Finest Hour 155, Summer 2012.

Michael McMenamin and his son Patrick are co-authors of the award-winning Winston Churchill Thriller series The DeValera Deception, The Parsifal Pursuit, The Gemini Agenda, and The Berghof Betrayal set during Churchill’s Wilderness Years, 1929–39.

Fact and Fiction about Churchill and Chaplin


Review by Werner Vogt

Originally published in Germany in 2014 as Zwei Herren am Strand, this novel by Michael Köhlmeier, an Austrian author of renown, deals with two great but very different men, Winston Churchill and Charlie Chaplin, and describes their relationship in general and their common problems with depression in particular. Given that Köhlmeier (born in 1949) is not only an experienced but also a well-decorated writer, expectations were of course high when the work was first published in the German-speaking world.

Köhlmeier’s endeavour was courageous, especially given that more has been written about Churchill than can be read and digested in a lifetime. It was certainly an original idea to approach the two giants of the twentieth century, their relationship and their dealing with “the black dog” (as Churchill called depression with a maximum of artistic licence) in a total and deliberate mix of fact and fiction. The idea of inventing history in a historical novel with fictional characters has a lot to it. And even when history is beefed up in order to qualify for an action thriller, as in Female Agents (starring Sophie Marceau), no one will really protest.

However, to approach two gigantic figures with a (declared) free mix of fact and fiction—as in Two Gentlemen on the Beach—is not a recipe for success. Even more than fifty years after Churchill’s death and more than seventy years after the end of the Second World War, too much is known about the wartime prime minister by too many people. And precisely this knowledge about Churchill will disturb the educated reader of Köhlmeier’s book.

The most basic problem is that Köhlmeier exaggerates the importance of Chaplin to Churchill. Even though there were encounters between the great statesman and the great actor, even though there certainly was a degree of mutual appreciation, there were definitely limits to the importance of the personal relationship between the two. The author greatly exaggerates in the general set up of the plot and equally confuses his readership in lots of details over which the more knowledgeable will stumble. The idea that Winston Churchill, together with a group of children from the Austrian province of Vorarlberg, should be taught by Charlie Chaplin how to be a clown is rather absurd. And the fact that the author freely invents sources like collections of letters adds more confusion.

The German original of Köhlmeier’s novel generated a lot of interest given the past work and merits of the author, but it was received by literary critics with much distance and scepticism. The Italians have a saying “Se non è vero, è ben trovato” (If it is not true, it is well invented). Unfortunately this is not the case with Köhlmeier’s novel. For the historically educated, not to say for Churchillian, the book is not a must read.

Werner Vogt is a writer and a communications consultant in Zurich. For his article about Churchill’s links to Switzerland, see page 28. For a review of his most recent book, see page 41.


**Review by David Freeman**

New books about Winston Churchill vary in size and quality. Whatever the case, *Finest Hour* sets out to separate the wheat from the chaff. There can be beauty in the miniature and malignancy in the meretricious.

Cate Ludlow’s *I Love Churchill: 400 Fantastic Facts* presents just that: 400 reliable facts about Churchill’s life in chronological order. This small but handsome paperback has sharp, modern graphics on each page to illustrate the concise but striking information. Despite the size, this quick and delightful read will not be out of place on display with its larger coffee-table siblings—a true gem.

“Many deplorable things are said under free speech,” Churchill observed in 1951, and M. S. King has made a career out of proving this point. His previous books include *Planet-Rothschild*, a two-volume attempt to show that the Rothschilds secretly run the world; and efforts to exculpate Putin and Hitler—the latter called *Mein Side of the Story*. At least he has a sense of humor. *The British Mad Dog: Debunking the Myth of Winston Churchill* adopts the form of presenting bare facts and then interpreting them with an acid-tipped pen intent on proving that Churchill was the anti-Christ. For King, Churchill’s many suspicious acts include joining the Freemasons. It seems King cannot decide for himself whether it is Jewish bankers or Freemasons that secretly control everything.

Cleanse your mind with this: Kathryn Selbert’s *War Dogs: Churchill and Rufus* is a sweet and warmly illustrated children’s book telling the story of Churchill’s time as prime minister during the war from the vantage point of his toy poodle Rufus. Famous quotations are posted throughout the book and documented in the back, where there is also a list of useful resources for children to explore, including The Churchill Centre’s website. Artistic liberties have been taken, of course. Rufus did not in fact sit on the Treasury Bench while his master spoke from the Despatch Box, but one rather wishes that he had. Woof! 🐶

**David Freeman** is the editor of *Finest Hour*.

**The Forces of Justice**


**Review by Nigel Hamilton**

Winston Churchill was born half-American—and ended his life as an honorary American. Educated as a soldier (at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst), moreover, he probably saw more combat in the field abroad than any US president or British prime minister. A military historian from his first books (*The Story of the Malakand Field Force* and *The River War*) to his near-last (*The Second World War*), he would have loved Nial Barr’s *Eisenhower’s Armies: The American-British Alliance during World War II*.

Churchill—who had a wonderfully wry sense of humor—would...
Also have been amused, I think, by the change of title as the book crossed the Atlantic—for it was originally published in Britain as “Yanks and Limeys.” (It bore, however, a less sensational subtitle, namely “Alliance Warfare in the Second World War.”)

Both titles are in reality misnomers, for whether it be Eisenhower’s Armies or Yanks and Limeys the 544-page book is far, far more than a study of US and British approaches to military alliance in the Second World War. A full third of the volume covers the period before the United States even entered the war, beginning in the year 1755 and carrying the reader up to Pearl Harbor.

This extended introduction to the subject could well have been published as a separate volume. As an examination of the difference between British and American professional military attitudes from colonial times to the Japanese sneak attack, then Hitler’s declaration of war on the United States four days later, this first section or history of British versus American ways of making war is in my opinion unsurpassed: intelligent, insightful and written in an uncommonly easy style. As Barr notes, “the idea of learning from one another or cooperation between the British and American armies” in the nineteenth century “was unthinkable,” thanks to the American Revolution and the War of 1812. The two nations’ armies—and approach to military education—thus proceeded on very different lines: the more so since the Civil War (“two armed mobs chasing each other around the countryside,” Barr quotes the widespread European view) was not considered to be relevant, nor its lessons worth using in training proud British army units.

More effective colonial policing and the crushing of rebellion were, to the British, the great and abiding lessons they drew from America’s escape from the British Empire: an empire that had, after all, only grown larger since the split.

The First World War, however, finally brought the two nations’ militaries briefly back together. As Barr cautions, relatively few American commanders in the Second World War, at least in Europe, had in fact seen combat service in 1918—whereas there was scarcely a single British commander in the Second World War who had not experienced bitter fighting in the trenches of Flanders or elsewhere. This was to be a seminal, scarring difference: some twenty thousand British soldiers killed on the first day of the Battle of the Somme in 1916—and hundreds of thousands more in similarly futile battles.

Small wonder then, Barr makes clear, that British Second World War commanders like Montgomery were for the most part cautious and, in the American view, unadventurous or unimaginative.

For their part, innocence of such traumas would prove a blessing in many ways for senior American officers, however—the word “defeatism” never once being heard in American headquarters in the Second World War. By contrast—fueled by the disasters in Norway, Dunkirk, Greece, Crete and North Africa, as well as in Hong Kong, Singapore and Burma—the feeling that the Germans could not be beaten (at least, not without unacceptable casualties) would pervade most British and British imperial and Commonwealth formations until late 1942, when Montgomery restored morale and a belief in British victory.

The first part of Eisenhower’s Armies thus acts as a prelude to Anglo-American coalition warfare, once US forces landed in Algeria and Morocco in November 1942. It is to Professor Barr’s great credit that he then proceeds to retell the well-known campaigns of the Second World War with a historian’s welcome objectivity, yet also an unfailingly human “take,” almost every page adding fresh detail or thoughtful interpretation.

I was first surprised that the author did not use some of the more recent works on the campaigns of the Second World War, such as Rick Atkinson’s “Liberation Trilogy.” It soon became clear, however, that he has beaten his own path in search of fresh commentary and insights, culled from diaries and unpublished documents still in American archives. His narrative thus remains fresh, original and constantly pleasing. Here is a historian mercifully without ax to grind in the Anglo-American strategic debates of the Second World War, only a fine teacher’s desire to lay out the challenges facing Anglo-American forces (war in the Pacific is not covered) in North Africa, the Mediterranean, and Europe—and how differently...
they were tackled by US and British commanders and troops, given their very different histories. And pay!

Most impressive, perhaps, among Barr’s qualities as a kind of retrospective observer of the war in the West, is his impartiality, mirroring that of General Eisenhower himself. Unlike so many British and American historians (Barr is British), he has proven himself capable of relentlessly honest critical assessment of Second World War strategy, operational planning, and field performance without national bias or prejudice—a remarkable achievement. In recounting Churchill’s intervention in Greece in the spring of 1941 and its sorry outcome, for example, Barr writes: “This catalogue of disasters gave the lie to any presumed British expertise in strategy”—something that would have dire implications “when the British continued to push for a Mediterranean strategy later in the war.” He quotes Major Bonner Feller’s reports from the faltering British campaign against Rommel in North Africa: “a devastating critique from the one American officer who had watched the British Army at close quarters.”

Equally, though, Barr is caustic about General Fredendall’s performance during the battle of Kasserine—describing the diary of the “somewhat humorless” British Signals general, Ronald Penney, who visited Fredendall’s US II Corps shortly before Rommel’s blitzkrieg attack. The Corps HQ was an astonishing sixty miles from the front, “literally dug into a hill” in fear of Luftwaffe attack, and “approached through a swamp,” Penney confided to his journal. Even Eisenhower, in Barr’s judgment, was remiss in not ordering Fredendall to pull his forward troops back to more defensible positions as Allied Commander in Chief, despite visiting him only hours before Rommel’s attack.

The battle proved a ghastly reverse, from top to bottom—i.e., from Allied Headquarters in Algiers down to the poor infantrymen in the Faid pass. But in terms of the Anglo-American learning curve it was a godsend. The German victory did nothing to avoid ultimate surrender by the Axis forces in North Africa, but did kick the Allies into more effective co-operation.

Penney had recorded that Fredendall was “full of ‘Jesus’—‘Son of a Bitch’—‘Goddammed’ etc. etc. but without the personality of Patton.” Patton was swiftly ordered to replace him—and the rest became history as US forces learned to fight and defeat their Wehrmacht opponents.

For Eisenhower, however, this was just another addition to his woes, as he attempted to keep the
Allies fighting the Germans, not each other. There were victories— but fiascos, too, such as Anzio, with considerable ill-feeling between commanders of national contingents. Barr, in my view, is far too kind concerning General Alexander, Eisenhower’s field deputy in the Mediterranean. Alexander was Churchill’s favorite general—because of his courage, imperturbability, and good looks. But Winston was not, for the most part, a good picker of men—and had Churchill had his way, and had he been permitted by the British Cabinet to appoint Alexander as Eisenhower’s land forces commander for the D-Day invasion, it is my humble opinion that D-Day would have failed—just as Anzio turned out to be a shambles.

Barr’s viewpoint, though, is that of alliance warfare—and from that perspective, as in the case of general Eisenhower, Alexander’s charm did ensure the two Allies kept facing the enemy, not each other. Which could not, sadly, be said of general Montgomery, who was appointed Allied Land Forces Commander under Eisenhower for the invasion.

To this day Bernard Montgomery’s name in America is close to mud, thanks not only to the prickly general’s boastfulness and press conferences during the Second World War, but his Memoirs, published in 1958, which trashed Eisenhower—who had since become a revered President of the United States!

Ironically, we thus have a strange situation where among serious American military historians Montgomery is rated, I have found, as by far and away the most professional Allied field commander of the Second World War—but cannot be canonized as such, owing to the abiding public disdain for him as a British pain in a proverbial part of the American psyche and anatomy!

It is to Barr’s further credit, then, that he has chronicled the story of US-British war-making from D-Day to Berlin with exemplary honesty, not pulling his punches, yet alive always to the difference between field combat and the highest, coalition aspects of command. Moreover he recognizes—as too many historians do not—that logistics determined, in the end, the progress or timetable of the war, even if they did not explain the battles.

“There is no question that by the end of October 1944,” Barr writes, “Eisenhower’s broad front strategy had run into the sand.” But with “units still training in the States, and others committed to the war in the Pacific, Eisenhower and his generals realized that the ‘90-division gamble,’” which was all the Pentagon could marshal, “left him with fewer than sixty divisions in Europe.” This was not enough to push his forces to the Rhine, indeed it was not enough “to provide a sufficient reserve,” as the Battle of the Bulge would soon demonstrate.

And so the war continued to its bitter end—moreover continued, as Barr writes, with no less ferociously after the last shots were fired, when the generals went into print.

“The Anglo-American alliance had always been more than the sum of its parts and far greater than the relations between a few men,” Barr wisely concludes. The Russians had refused to have anything to do with their coalition partners, on the battlefield, or above it, or at sea—Stalin paranoid that contact with an ally might expose the tyranny of his communist dream. But the United States did hunker down with its primary western ally, in the most extraordinary way, from Lend-Lease to shared blood. And that Anglo-American story, in Barr’s telling, is at once noble and unforgettable, for all the tensions, rivalries, and disagreements between them. As such, Eisenhower’s Armies deserves to become a classic.

Field Marshal Earl Alexander of Tunis

Nigel Hamilton is senior fellow in the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies. Dr. Hamilton is author of Monty, an award-winning three-volume biography of Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery. He is currently at work on a three-volume study of Franklin D. Roosevelt as US Commander in Chief during the Second World War. The second volume, Commander in Chief: FDR’s Battle with Churchill, 1943, was published in June 2016.
Seventy years ago at Zurich University Winston Churchill delivered one of his most important post-war speeches (see pages 7, 31, and 41). Although given the somber title “The Tragedy of Europe,” Churchill’s remarks set out a plan for rebuilding the war-torn continent. Proposing “a kind of United States of Europe,” Churchill acknowledged that he might “astonish” his audience when he insisted, “The first step in the re-creation of the European family must be a partnership between France and Germany.” He ended his remarks with the exhortation, “And therefore I say to you, let Europe arise!” Or did he?

The short answer is yes. The speech was recorded, and the closing statement can be clearly heard (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ln4SRnt4VE0). The university placed two commemorative plaques to mark the occasion, one in English and one in German, each including the famous final phrase. Yet the published versions of Churchill’s speech do not include it at all.

The speech first appeared in the 1948 collection The Sinews of Peace, edited by Randolph Churchill and published in the UK by Cassell. The last line, however, is missing. Nor can it be found in other editions, including the Complete Speeches edited by Robert Rhodes James published in 1974. To find any written record of the remark in the Churchill papers, one must go to the source. And there lies a mystery as well.

The Churchill Archives Centre has three typed copies of the speech. The speaking notes that Churchill actually used (see, below left) contain a handwritten insertion by Churchill himself about “Soviet Russia” but nothing at all about “let Europe arise!” The other two texts, which Archives Director Allen Packwood believes to be corrected versions produced by Churchill’s staff after delivery to record what was in fact said, do not include the last line in type. To these copies (see one example, below right) the closing words have been added in handwriting by someone other than Churchill.

The most likely explanation is that Churchill improvised his uplifting conclusion “let Europe arise!” and that Randolph Churchill worked from the original speech notes, which did not include the statement, rather than from the corrected texts. Subsequent editors followed his lead.
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