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WINSTON CHURCHILL: AN APPRECIATION

BY RALPH RAICO

(Ed. Note: We do not ordinarily publish articles of this length in the *Lib. Forum*. But Professor Raico's scintillating article is of such importance that we are waiving that rule in order to publish it in one piece. Winston Churchill's reputation—fueled by massive propaganda machines in the West—is generally one of uncritical adulation, especially in conservative and even in libertarian circles. We venture to predict that, after Professor Raico's article, that reputation will never be the same again.

We are also proud to announce that Dr. Raico plans to write a bi-monthly column for us, "The Tory Watch", which will keep a sharp and critical eye on the conservative movement in the United States. Dr. Raico is a professor of history at State University College at Buffalo.)

The Prime Minister . . . considered that we should wait till we had got Russia against Japan. We should then establish air bases near Vladivostok from which Japan could be bombed, and, according to him, we should then sing the "Ladybird Song" to the Japs: "Ladybird, ladybird, fly away home, your house is on fire, and children at home."

—from the Diary of Field Marshall
Lord Alanbrook, April 22, 1943

Marching ever further on the way of interventionism, first Germany, then Great Britain and many other European countries have adopted central planning, the Hindenburg pattern of socialism. It is noteworthy that in Germany the deciding measures were not resorted to by the Nazis, but some time before Hitler seized power by Bruening . . . and in Great Britain not by the Labor Party but by the Tory Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill.

—Ludwig von Mises,
Human Action, p. 855

I

Winston Churchill, whose centennial occurred last year, is considered by many to be the Great Man of the Twentieth Century. He was, for instance, the first and so far only person to be made an honorary citizen of the United States (in the course of this . . . appreciation, we shall have occasion to examine the precise nature of the blood link between Churchill and the American people). Of all his idolators, American neo-conservatives have been the most frenzied. James J. Martin, the revisionist authority, is probably correct in suggesting that this is due to "their urgent necessity to retain at least one towering figure in which they can vest their faith and verbal reflexes" (so inner-directed are they!). The "duel" between Churchill and Hitler fascinates them, as it does others, and is the foundation of Churchill's "greatness" (This may well turn out to be the most enduring injury Hitler inflicted on humanity; that, besides causing the slaughter of so many, he permanently lowered the standards by which political conduct is judged, so that, compared to him, virtually any other mass-murderer—except maybe Stalin—is seen to

be as white as the driven snow.) The facts about the forced repatriation of hundreds of thousands of anti-Communist Soviet subjects to the USSR, to almost certain imprisonment or death, are just now becoming public knowledge; and Churchill's crucial role in this process is probably causing many conservatives some uneasy moments. But those who had to await this to begin to suspect that all was not well with their hero simply know nothing of Churchill's career. In fact, as I will try to show, he was, at best, a not particularly good specimen of his class and type, and, on the critical occasions when he held history-shaping power, by every rational definition and many times over a war criminal who badly wanted hanging.

Before we examine his political record in some detail, a few comments are in order regarding the general cast of Churchill's character and mind. The word most often connected with his name, before 1940 at least, was "opportunist," and with reason. He had, after all, changed party affiliation twice, from Conservative to Liberal and back again. As protege of Lloyd George, he opposed the call for increased armaments in 1909; after becoming First Lord of the Admiralty in 1911, he pushed for larger and larger budgets, spreading wild rumors of the strength of the German Navy (as, in the 1930s, he was to do in regard to the German Air Force). Just before the First World War he spoke out as a Cobdenite Free Trader, and was sympathetic even to the ideas of Henry George; during the War he promoted war socialism in Britain, calling for nationalization of the railroads, and saying, in a speech at Dundee: "Our whole nation must be organized, must be socialized if you like the word." He went in for faddish issues; for a number of years, for instance, he regularly attacked "the horrid liquor traffic" (an amusing bit of hypocrisy from someone who all his life was a controlled alcoholic).

Churchill's opportunism continued throughout his career: after 1945, his speeches against the policies of the Labour Government echo *The Road to Serfdom*, while it had been Churchill himself who, in December, 1942, had accepted the Beveridge Plan as the basis for the postwar welfare state. Small wonder that Francis Neilson writes of him: "I cannot find in his own works or in the memoirs of his colleagues a single economic or political principle that he held steadfastly." Churchill's career spanned over fifty years—and yet, there is not the slightest reason to dissent from the judgment passed on him already by 1914 by John Morley, the last of the great Manchester liberals, who knew him in the Asquith cabinet: "Winston has no principles."

One might have thought that the one cause to which he would have remained true was anti-Bolshevism (he had called the Bolshevik leaders, quite rightly, "bloody baboons" and "the foul murderers of Moscow"). But then there is his record during World War II of instant and unconditional support of Stalin. This may be symbolized by the incident Fuller reports: "On 29th November (1943) at Teheran, Mr. Churchill, to the stains of the Internationale, presented Marshall Stalin with a Crusader's sword." (Conservatives concerned to define "obscenity" ought to meditate on the nature of that act.) Well, yes, there was one

cause which claimed his loyalty throughout: the British Empire—that meaningless flash-in-the-pan (what price “Empress of India” now?) for which over the centuries so much human blood was shed. Better Englishmen than he have understood that Empire for the Aztec altar it was. The Empire is what Richard Cobden had in mind when he said: “We have been the most combative and aggressive community that has existed since the days of the Roman dominion,” and which led Lord Acton to state: “No Christian annals are as sanguinary as ours.” Imagine to yourself a person whose one true love was a world-wide military-bureaucratic despotism! With Churchill it was a case, as with Disraeli, of a self-intoxication and revelling in fantasies and empty symbols on the part of an alienated man who happened to have, on a vulgar level, a way with words.

This brings us to what one suspects has impressed American conservatives, *Life* magazine readers, *Book of the Month* Club members, etc., more than anything else about Churchill: his literary style. At times it could be close to charming (in describing his own early life and war experiences, for example), and he was always good at depicting battles and the rush of war. But whenever it came to writing about the larger issues involved in politics, whenever he had to try to cope with what might be enduring and really significant in human conflict, what he has to offer is something quite different: Whig rubbish, bombast at every remotely plausible point, a constant grabbing for the would-be spine-tling symbol or metaphor, the product of a very poor man’s Macaulay, as “fine old British stuff” as, say, the Wilkinson Swordblade commerial (with its Churchillian “Balaclava, Omdurman . . .”). One tires of the Churchill style after the first couple of hundred pages—and there are many thousands more to come.

II.

Churchill was born into the ruling class of Britain in an age when it was also the ruling class of a quarter of the globe. The family name and fortune had been made by John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough, the famous general in the wars against Louis XIV (he “humbled six marshals of France,” Macaulay wrote, in his corny way). After the wars had come to an end, Marlborough was censured by the House of Commons for corruption on a vast scale, and the Crown proceeded against him to try and recover some of the funds he had gained through graft from war contracts. Besides this sort of corruption—admitted to be such even by other members of the privileged orders of the time—he and Duchess held offices and pensions to the annual value of over 60,000 pounds. Marlborough and his descendants, in other words, belonged to the caste of aristocratic parasites who have, through most of human history, lived on the tribute exacted from working men and women. (After 1789, the French people opened the eyes of some of these parasites—rather forcefully—to certain important truths about social reality.) Later, Winston composed a four volume work in praise of his ancestor; even if he had not owed everything he had and was to Marlborough, he would most likely have found him a man completely to his taste anyway, for, as he says: “With all his faults, right or wrong, (Marlborough) was always for fighting; which is something.” More than anything else, Churchill inherited from his family the old aristocratic hereditary taint: the view that mankind is divided into two species, and that it is good that some are little, so that others may be great. Throughout his life, this was the way Churchill looked out on the world. Combine this with his love of war, and endow the combination with Power, and it was easy to foresee that the product would be no blessing to the human race.

In what follows, we shall be speaking practically incessantly of wars, of the plotting of them and of their conduct. The reader may come to find this tedious, but there is no help for it. We are dealing with a man whose life and career were intertwined with the wars waged by the British State since 1899. War, one may say, was the life of Winston Churchill. He himself traces his orientation back to his childhood, when he had an immense collection of toy soldiers (nearly 1500 of them) and played with them for years after most boys turn to other things. They were “all British,” he tells us, “and organized as an infantry division with a cavalry brigade.” He fought battles with his younger brother Jack, who “was only allowed to have coloured troops; and they were not allowed to have artillery.” His early fascination with the military led his father to choose Sandhurst, the British military academy, for his higher education (there was in any case no alternative, since Winston had no Greek at all and used to crib his Latin translations from a fellow student at Harrow). Churchill later described his state of mind as a young man:

If it had only been 100 years earlier, what splendid times we should have had! Fancy being nineteen in 1793 with more than twenty years of war against Napoleon in front of one! Luckily, however, there were still savages and barbarous peoples. There were Zulus and Afghans, also the Dervishes of the Soudan . . . There might even be a mutiny or a revolt in India.

So lustful for war was Churchill at one and twenty that, there temporarily being none in which Britain itself was involved, in 1895 he volunteered for the Spanish Army to fight the Cuban rebels, and it was at Las Villas that he first came under fire. H. G. Wells later insightfully compared him to D’Annunzio (adding dryly that “he is a great amateur and collector of texts upon Napoleon”). The comparison is apt. With both there is the view that life is worthless if not filled with great deeds in battle; a burning thirst for glory, together with a cruel lack of genius; and an almost effeminate habit of self-glorification.

During the next few years, England was “lucky” enough to become involved in a number of colonial wars, and Churchill was able to serve under his own flag. He saw action on the North West frontier and with Kitchener in the Sudan, and was captured by the Boers in South Africa; each of these times he acted also as a correspondent, sending back chauvinistic accounts of the engagements to the London press. His background and contacts helped get him into the House of Commons as a Tory, but in 1904, Churchill crossed the floor to the Liberal side on the issue of Free Trade.

After the Liberals returned to power in 1906, Churchill began to climb the conventional ladder of political success. As Home Secretary in 1910-11, his most famous exploit involved the police “battle” with a group of anarchists who had barricaded themselves in a house on Sidney Street, in London. Churchill showed up at the scene for no apparent reason, and “when the building caught fire and the fire brigade arrived he gave instructions to the fire-brigade officer on his authority as Home Secretary that he was to allow the building to burn.” (Emrys Hughes, *Winston Churchill: British Bulldog*, the best revisionist work on the subject.) Among the charred bodies that were recovered, however, there was missing that of the alleged leader, Peter the Painter. This evidently galled Churchill, for he continued the fight against this “wild beast” (his words), years afterwards writing that “rumor” had it that Peter the Painter had later turned up in Russia and become one of the Bolshevik leaders insanely bent on decimating that wretched country. That this was highly improbable on the face of it, since, historically, there have existed—shall we say—problems between anarchists and Marxists, was not something Churchill could be expected to know. For him, all the enemies of the established order of inherited privilege and Anglo-Saxon world hegemony were, and would always be, “wild beasts.” (Compare his exultant cry at the news of the murder of Mussolini: “Ah, the bloody beast is dead!”) There was no particular reason to make fine distinctions among the animals.

The position Churchill developed for himself around this time was that of “social imperialist,” perhaps the dominant political philosophy in most Western countries by the outbreak of the First World War. Masquerading as a form of radicalism, social imperialism essentially signified the paying out, inch by inch, of the system of competitive capitalism and private property—through social welfare legislation, occasional nationalizations, promotion of “responsible” trade unionism, subsidies of all kinds, etc.—in order to marshal the masses behind the imperialist policies of their respective rulers. It adored the national collective, and was fond of thinking with fictitious concepts such as “national energy” and “national resources” (intended to include the mental and physical abilities of the people). Its pose as the wave of the future was the most contemptible thing about it. Churchill at the time had no qualms about cashing in on that pose, however. He said, in a speech to his constituents: “I am on the side of those who think that a greater collective element should be introduced into the State and municipalities. I should like to see the State undertaking new functions, stepping into new spheres of activity. . . .” A sample of Churchill as conservative philosopher: “No man can be a collectivist alone or an individualist alone. He must be both an individualist and a collectivist. The nature of man is a dual nature. The character of the organization of human society is dual. Man is at once a unique being and a gregarious animal. For some purposes he must be a collectivist, for others he is, and he will for all time remain, an individualist.” Deep, deep. Actually, on the

fundamental issues, Churchill never progressed beyond such stuff. It could not, obviously, stem the socialist tide. In any case, that wasn't the point. As long as the masses could be persuaded that their government was "socially conscious," and so kept in line for the next war, things might after all work out. The height of Churchill's willingness to trade off what remained of an economically free society against his foreign policy aims came during World War II. Then, in order to calm socialist discontent and help unify the nation even more firmly behind the one important goal—the total destruction of Germany—Churchill announced his adherence to the welfare state: "You must rank me and my colleagues as strong partisans of national compulsory insurance for all classes for all purposes from the cradle to the grave."

In 1911 Churchill abandoned the field of domestic concerns, for which he never had the slightest ability and very little interest, and became First Lord of the Admiralty. Now, as head of one of the great branches of the British world-imperial machine, helping to make *die grosse Politik* along with all the other masters of men, he was in his element. Naturally, he quickly allied himself with the war party in the British government. At the time of the Second Moroccan Crisis (1911), he fanned the fires of war by sending a memorandum to Foreign Secretary Edward Grey suggesting that England prepare itself to ship an army to Belgium and be ready to put "extreme pressure" on the Dutch (the first example, I believe, of a continuing trait of Churchill's: the propensity to bully small neutrals). The crisis passed, but by the next year, he, along with other key figures in the Asquith cabinet, were talking privately of the inevitable coming war with Germany and the preparations it would require. When the final crisis came, in July, 1914 (who can read about the accelerating plunge into war of those days without a sickening feeling? From that crisis was to come, directly, the deaths of some ten or twelve million men, and, indirectly, Bolshevism and Nazism, the age of perpetual war, and the slide towards a totally collectivist world; and all those responsible for that war died in their beds!—no, at least the Tsar received a just reward)—when the great crisis came, Churchill must have felt like a sadist with a dawning appreciation that he is about to be put in charge of a concentration camp. Of course, he frantically pushed for war. His own Prime Minister later wrote of him: "Nothing would do him but immediate mobilisation. . . Winston, who has got all his war paint on, is longing for a sea fight in the early hours of the morning to result in the sinking of the *Goeben*." The mobilization of the British fleet (or, rather, the order not to disperse, since it had already been concentrated for "war games") was given on July 26, two days before the first Russian general mobilization orders, and it encouraged the warmongers in Petersburg. On the afternoon of July 28, three days before the invasion of Belgium, Churchill ordered the British fleet—the greatest naval force ever assembled in the history of the world to that time—"to proceed during the night at high speed and without lights through the Straits of Dover from Portland to its fighting base at Scapa Flow" (Sidney Fay, *The Origins of the World War*). "Fearing to bring this order before the Cabinet, lest it should be considered a provocative action likely to damage the chances of peace (sic!), Mr. Churchill had only informed Mr. Asquith, who at once gave his approval." Now, what Churchill could do to insure that England would not be left out of the Great War, he had done. There is no reason for surprise that, according to the other, relatively reluctant members of the British war party, was visibly thrilled and all smiles when the ultimatum to Germany expired without a satisfactory reply, and England was in the war.

III.

In regard to Churchill's role during World War I, we will omit any discussion of his plan for a naval attack on the Dardanelles, which led to the fiasco of the Gallipoli campaign (a disaster which clung to Churchill's name for many years to come). Instead, much more important for an understanding of Churchill is the story of a ship called the *Lusitania*.

The indispensable work on this subject is Colin Simpson's recent intelligent and highly praised book, *The Lusitania*. The facts (uncontested) which Simpson presents have to appear incredible to anyone raised on the Churchill legend. Basically, as First Lord of the Admiralty, Churchill, from the first days of the war, pursued a policy deliberately conceived and designed to destroy all rules of warfare in the North Atlantic, with the aim of involving the United States in war with Germany. (Ultimately he was successful.) For example, masters of British merchant ships were instructed to attack surfaced U-boats; as Churchill himself wrote: "The first British countermove, made on my responsibility . . . was to deter the Germans from surface attack. The

submerged U-boat had to rely increasingly on underwater attack and thus ran the greater risk of mistaking neutral for British shipping and of drowning neutral crews and thus embroiling Germany with other Great Powers." Other orders included flying neutral flags on all British ships, killing captured U-boat survivors, and the startling: "In all action, white flags should be fired upon with promptitude."

The reader interested in a truly fascinating account both of high and sinister politics and of war at sea should by all means read Simpson's book, where he or she will be able to follow in detail the story of how the United States was "embroiled" with Germany from 1914-1917, and thus launched on the road to global responsibility. Here we can only focus on the strange doings in London in the first days of May, 1915, as the *Lusitania*, on its way to Liverpool and loaded with munitions of war, was nearing submarine-infested waters off the southern coast of Ireland. Colonel House was having the eerie experience, on two different occasions, of being asked suddenly and unaccountably, by Edward Grey and then by George V, what would happen if the *Lusitania* were sunk? To both he responded that that would certainly bring the United States into the war. Now the scene shifts to the Admiralty. In Simpson's words: "Admiral Oliver drew Churchill's attention to the fact that the *Junco* (originally intended to convoy the *Lusitania*) was unsuitable for exposure to submarine attack without escort, and suggested that elements of the destroyer flotilla from Milford Haven should be sent forthwith to her assistance. At this juncture, the Admiralty War Diary stops short, perhaps understandably, as it was here the decision was made that was to be the direct cause of the disaster. No one alive knows who made it, but Churchill and Fisher must share responsibility. Shortly after noon on May 5 the Admiralty signaled to the *Junco* to abandon her escort mission and return to Queenstown . . . The *Lusitania* was not informed that she was now alone, and closing every minute to the U-20 . . . It was an incredible decision by any standards and can only be explained on two grounds: that both Churchill and Fisher were so pre-occupied with the Dardanelles and their personal problems that they failed to appreciate it (but the *Lusitania* was the most famous ship in the world, known by them to be in imminent danger of being sunk—rr); or that it was the pinnacle of Churchill's higher strategy of embroiling the U-boats with a neutral power."

For the student of the Pearl Harbor attack there are numerous ironic pre-echoes in the *Lusitania* affair: the fact that the German code had been broken by the British, so that they were aware of the position of the submarines in the path of the *Lusitania* (as the American government was aware of many facets of the "surprise" attack of December 7, likewise because of having broken the Japanese code); the mystifying overruling of a subordinate naval officer who proposes what, under the circumstances, is Standard Operating Procedure (as Admiral Stark overruled the officer who urged, on the morning of December 7, that the commanders at Pearl Harbor be informed of the imminence of war); the attempt to set up the *Lusitania*'s captain, William Turner, as the fall guy (much as Kimmel and Short were set up for the role); Churchill's abruptly leaving, after the decision had been made not to send an escort, for Paris and making himself incommunicado (as General Marshall was incommunicado the morning of the Pearl Harbor attack); and, of course, the official horror and wringing of hands at the unheard of atrocity by the enemy—in reality, the fruit of tireless planning on the part of Churchill and Roosevelt respectively, and the fulfillment of their heart's desire.

Later in 1915, when the Cabinet was reorganized, Churchill was removed from the Admiralty as a condition of the Tories joining the government. The excitement of battle being temporarily withdrawn, he was utterly despondent ("the black dog" was his private name for the periodic fits of depression to which he was subject). To one visitor, Churchill said, pointing to the war maps which covered his office wall: "This is what I live for . . . Yes, I am finished in respect of all I care for—the waging of war, the defeat of the Germans." (For the critic looking to condemn Churchill out of his own mouth, there is truly an embarrassment of riches.)

Two items regarding Churchill in the immediate post-World War I period, when he was Minister of War and then Colonial Secretary, must be mentioned (many others, for instance his nearly involving England in another war with Turkey over the "Chanak incident" in 1922, and his "little wars" against colonial peoples, in Mesopotamia and elsewhere, simply cannot be dealt with here: Churchill's life was just too "action-packed" for every warmongering action and initiative to be listed): the

continuation of the British blockade of Germany for months after the Armistice, and the armed intervention against the Bolshevik Revolution.

In his capacity as Minister of War (incidentally, one can say of Churchill in this office what Tansill said of Stimson as Secretary of War—No one ever deserved the name more), he ceaselessly promoted a crusade against the new regime in Russia (in 1942, in Moscow, he asked Stalin—literally—whether he “forgave” him for this policy). Lloyd George said of him at this time: “The most formidable and irresponsible protagonist of an anti-Bolshevist war was Mr. Winston Churchill,” and added, with a shrewd guess as to part of the motivation: “His ducal blood revolted against the wholesale elimination of Grand Dukes in Russia.” The cost of armed British intervention was officially estimated at 100,000,000 pounds, and the attempt to strangle Communism “in its cradle” earned, naturally enough, the lasting enmity and suspicion of the Russian leaders. It is also possible, as Emrys Hughes suggests, that it helped consolidate nationalist-minded support behind them, and thus aided Lenin and Trotsky in winning the Civil War; in which case, one would have to add to the debit side of Churchill’s career a small item having to do with some fifty years of Red Terror in the Soviet Union.

The point of continuing the blockade was to increase the misery and privation of the Germans so that they would have no alternative to accepting the Carthaginian terms of the Paris Settlement. No one was in the dark as to what the blockade meant. Churchill himself told the House of Commons in March, 1919: “We are enforcing the blockade with rigour, and Germany is very near starvation. All the evidence I have received from officers sent by the War Office all over Germany show: firstly, the great privation which the German people are suffering; and, secondly, the danger of a collapse of the entire structure of German social and national life under the pressure of hunger and malnutrition.”

Historians often write as if Hitler’s concept of “zoological warfare,” of war as aiming at the systematic weakening of an enemy people in the most basic physiological sense, came to him from reading a few murky, nutty Social Darwinist tracts in Vienna cafes. These are supposed to have sparked in his “sick” mind what a victorious Germany might feel justified in doing to a defeated Poland or Russia. I would suggest a different interpretation as a possibility: his experience of the actual behavior of the triumphant Entente after the First World War (especially the blockade and the French invasion of the Ruhr in 1923). More generally, it seems to me that Hitler’s goals for Europe and the methods he was prepared to achieve them, and his well-known admiration for the British Empire are two elements in his makeup that deserve to be considered together. As evidence for this interpretation, there is his famous conversation with his military officers in 1940, reported by General Blumentritt: “He then astonished us by speaking with admiration of the British Empire . . . He remarked with a shrug of the shoulders, that the creation of its Empire had been achieved by means that were often harsh, but ‘where there is planning, there are shavings flying.’” Hitler, in other words, did not come out of a political vacuum, nor are the “roots” of National Socialism to be found in a few 19th century scribblers. Rather, the actual practice of Western imperialism, particularly by Britain, is a main source. After all, what did British imperialism mean but the “Master Race” idea applied to the colored races? The scandal came when Hitler made it clear that he intended to abolish the artificial distinction which Western imperialists had drawn between the white and colored races; that he meant to treat the Slavs, for instance, much as the Congolese and the Javanese had been treated. (This enables us to understand the Nazi ideological nonsense about the non-contribution to “world civilization” of the non-civilized and thus, according to the rules accepted by all Western imperialists, making them fit objects of exploitation.) That in the end England and its Empire were to suffer greatly at the hands of a Hitler motivated by such notions, may suggest to some that there is an ironic justice in the moral economy of the world.

IV.

In 1924 Churchill rejoined the Conservative Party and was made Chancellor of the Exchequer, a position his father had held (Lord Randolph was noted, when he held the position, for having been puzzled by the decimals—what were those “damned dots”?). Although just the year before, as a Liberal, Churchill was still supporting Free Trade, he now included in his 1925 budget the protective McKenna duties, assisting Britain along the road to protectionism that it was to complete in 1932. Doubtless his most famous act as head of the Exchequer was to return

England to the gold standards, but at the unrealistic pre-war parity, thus seriously harming the export trade and the economy at large, and ruining the good name of gold in the public’s mind. There would be scarcely anyone today who would argue with A. J. P. Taylor’s evaluation of Churchill’s action here: he “did not grasp the economic arguments one way or the other. What determined him was again a devotion to British greatness. The pound would once more ‘look the dollar in the face’; the days of Queen Victoria would be restored.” Lord Esher had said of him in 1917: “He handles great subjects in rhythmical language, and becomes quickly enslaved by his own phrases,” and whatever issue he put his mind to, in foreign or domestic affairs, this was the level on which his mind operated.

After the fall of the Baldwin government in 1929, Churchill was out of office. The question of India having become prominent, he soon distinguished himself as the head of the reactionary Tory clique in the House of Commons which insisted on a hard-line towards Gandhi and the Indian National Congress. Churchill’s ideas on this subject were pure Tory guff, and a good example of what Esher was referring to, e. g.: “The loss of India would mark and consummate the downfall of the British Empire. That great organism would pass at a stroke out of Life into History. From such a catastrophe there could be no recovery.” Contrast to the alienated Churchill, who lived by a system of lovingly self-wrought pictures in his head—whose mind was constituted of such pictures—an Englishman with his feet on the ground, Richard Cobden, who in 1836 wrote: “It is customary . . . to hear our standing army and navy defended as necessary for the protection of our colonies, as though some other nation might otherwise seize them. Where is the enemy (?) that would be so good as to steal such property? We should consider it to be quite as necessary to arm in defence of our national debt!”

To the end, Churchill was virtually the stereotype of the Tory imperialist. In 1942, he had Gandhi and other Congress leaders arrested, and the government which less than a year before had signed the Atlantic Charter announced from Bombay an Emergency Whipping Order, permitting as many as “thirty strokes with a cane in the presence of a doctor.” Finally, of course, it was Churchill’s very policy of war with Germany to the bitter end that so weakened Britain economically and militarily as to make the loss of the Empire, including India, inevitable.

As the totalitarian States began to emerge from the 20s on, Churchill, the century’s great hero of liberal democracy, praised their leaders one after the other. The prime example of this is Mussolini, for whom Churchill expressed unstinting admiration right up until he became Hitler’s ally; as late as 1935 he referred to Mussolini as “so great a man and so wise a ruler.” But even Hitler did not escape Churchill’s verbal caresses; late in 1937, he stated: “One may dislike Hitler’s system and yet admire his patriotic achievement. If our country were defeated I hope we should find a champion as indomitable to restore our courage and lead us back to our place among the nations.” Here is a perfect example of Churchill’s value system in operation. Consider: by 1937 Hitler had imprisoned or executed some thousands of political opponents, legislated against the Jews, entirely dismantled the system of civil liberties, and was clearly set on erecting a totalitarian State with the annihilation of the individual which that implies. And yet, because he played the old game of nationalist politics—and played it very, very well—he could still command Churchill’s respect! The bother only came when Hitler was perceived as threatening England’s world position.

Similarly with the Russian Communist leaders. Lenin and Trotsky, with their concept of world revolution, were “bloody baboons”; Stalin, on the other hand, who appeared to be more concerned with socialism in one country, and was, in any case, an ally against Hitler, was an excellent candidate for the role of “great man.” Churchill’s comments after June, 1941, on Stalin and Stalinism are priceless: here’s an example, from May, 1944, which it would be hard to better from the lips of any fey fellow-traveller of the time: “Profound changes have taken place in Soviet Russia. The Trotskyite form of communism has been completely wiped out (on oblique, favorable reference to the purges of the late 30s, which claimed some 700,000 lives!—rr). The victory of the Russian armies has been attended by a great rise in the strength of the Russian state and a remarkable broadening of its views. The religious side of Russian life has had a wonderful rebirth,” etc., etc. To my mind, what we have in these almost unbelievable eulogies by Churchill is a case of that terrible freemasonry of spirit among the high governing class, whereby each can empathize with and sympathetically understand the “problems” the

other faces—Hitler's shrug at the "shavings flying" in the wake of British imperialism—and which makes the much closer to one another in their outlook on life than to those on whose necks their feet are respectively planted.

From 1929 to the outbreak of war in 1939, Churchill was out of office, ostracized by the leaders of his own party, an unprecedented occurrence for someone who had filled the high positions which he had. A major reason is that he was known as a fomentor of wars (Herbert Morrison could casually call him a "fire-eater and a militarist" without raising eyebrows—this was simply the common view), and there was a strong pacifist tide running in Britain. After Hitler came to power, however, Churchill began to attract attention once more, as the head of the faction that favored a "firm" policy towards Germany. As he put it to General Robert E. Wood when they lunched together in November, 1936: "Germany is getting too strong and we must smash her."

Churchill has covered his name with glory in the eyes of many for thus having been the leader of the war party in the middle and late 30s, and pushing for British "rearmament" (actually, Britain, like France and the French allies in East Central Europe, had never disarmed—they were, in fact, all armed to the teeth—and it had rejected every plan, put forward by successive German governments and even by Litvinov, for a general European disarmament). This he may be conceded. But what was his peace plan? In 1933 he had denounced Mussolini's proposal for a Four-Power Pact to revise the Paris Settlement peacefully, as in 1938 he was to denounce the Munich Agreement. He never once, however, suggested an alternative course—except to increase British armaments even further and grimly resolve to defend Versailles by force. In this spirit he applauded Chamberlain's lunatic unconditional guarantee to Poland in March, 1939 (pledging England to war if anything occurred that "clearly threatened Polish independence, and which the Polish Government accordingly considered it vital to resist with their national forces"). Afterwards Churchill himself criticized the guarantee in these terms: "Here was decision at last, taken on the worst possible grounds, which surely lead to the slaughter of tens of millions of people."

The policy Churchill urged and which was ultimately adopted by the British Government, is understandable only on the basis of the establishment's line: namely, that Hitler wanted to "conquer the world." (Funny how easily that goal is imputed to those who happen to find themselves at odds with the British or American States: as if "conquering the world"—that is, defeating the various powers of Europe and Asia and garrisoning their territories, occupying Africa, sending armadas to attack and occupy North and South America, and so on—and all this without encountering any disheartening difficulties—were something that would quite naturally occur to the head of a country, like Germany, with some 25 million adult males, or the leaders of a country, like Japan, with 15% of the GNP of the United States—but then there is their well-known "insanity" to explain the astonishing lack of realism. Meanwhile, the fact that Britain had already conquered and was in possession of one-fourth of the world is accepted as a datum of the Cosmos.) A. J. P. Taylor has shown, though, that Hitler's plans can much more adequately be explained as centering on a restoration of Brest-Litovsk—the settlement of 1918 between Germany and Russia which established German hegemony in Eastern Europe. Why anyone should feel that such a state of affairs threatened vital British interests is a mystery. In any case, it would surely be difficult to maintain that the final outcome of the Second Crusade—the hegemony over the eastern half of the Continent by a more formidable power—was vastly and obviously to be preferred.

At all events, in September, 1939, war came once more between the Western allies and Germany (the fixedness of the past gives the illusion that this was inevitable, but that is far from being the case). Churchill was immediately recalled to his old job as head of the Admiralty, and, in May, 1940, his life's ambition was realized. He became Prime Minister.

V.

In directing the British war effort from 1940 to 1945, Churchill, the "great strategist," was wrong much more often than he was right. (His overall expertise can be gathered from the fact that, in 1938, he referred to the French Army as "the most perfectly trained and faithful mobile force in Europe.") The decision to send troops to North Africa was a wise one; the decision to send them to Greece, from which they were forced to withdraw in a second Dunkirk, was the opposite, and prevented finishing off the Italian North African forces before Rommel could arrive. His

philosophy of the offensive in warfare helped hasten the fall of France (it would have been more sensible, according to Fuller, to try to hold the river-lines). Later, disastrously underestimating Japanese air power, Churchill sent the two great battleships *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* to Singapore, to deter a Japanese attack. They were sunk by land-based bombers in the first days of the Pacific War, swinging the balance of naval power to Japan and destroying the morale of the forces at Singapore. Britain was saved from defeat in the Second World War not by Churchill's military genius (he had none), but by Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union and by the circumstance that the White House was occupied by a man as boyishly eager as Churchill himself to bring war to his people.

More than any other of his acts in this war, Churchill's plan (while he was still at the Admiralty) to take over neutral Norway was a fiasco. Hitler, in early 1940, had declared himself satisfied with a genuinely neutral position for Norway, but on February 6, 1940, the British War Council approved the plan to seize Narvik and occupy northern Norway and Sweden by force, as well as the Swedish port of Lulea on the Baltic. As a preliminary to the attack, the British violated and then began mining Norwegian territorial waters, leading the Germans to forestall the British occupation by their own invasion of Norway (Denmark was taken on the way). What the Norwegians and Danes suffered in World War II, they owe to Winston Churchill.

A very important sidelight of this affair is that Churchill's plan included sending an expeditionary force to help Finland against the Red Army (this was also to provide a pretext for the invasion of the neutral countries). Thus, in 1940, England came perilously close to war with both Russia and Germany. That Churchill was prepared to risk that shows that the man lived in a dangerous fantasy-world much of the time. If England had faced what Germany did by 1945, there is little doubt that historians would now be recording much the same breakdown of mind and personality in Churchill's case that the world knows so well in Hitler's.

A famous incident in the early stages of the war, now mostly forgotten, was the treacherous attack ordered by Churchill on the French Mediterranean fleet, following the fall of France. Not trusting in his ally's promise never to allow the fleet to come into German hands, Churchill ordered British commanders in the Mediterranean to demand the instantaneous surrender of French naval units, and in case of their ultimatum immediately to open fire. According to Liddel Hart, "all three admirals concerned—Cunningham, Somerville, and North at Gibraltar—were horrified by Churchill's orders." At Alexandria, Cunningham disregarded the fantic urgings of this ruthless man, and gained the end through patient negotiations. At Mers-el-Kebir (Oran), however, French ships were fired on, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of French sailors (just as, in the course of the liberation of France, there were to be nearly as many deaths of French civilians from British and American bombers as Britons killed by German bombers). What was left of the French fleet retired to Toulon, where, in 1942, when the Germans threatened to seize it, the French honored their word and scuttled their ships.

That Churchill could be a dangerous ally may well have been learned the hard way by the Poles also, although here the full facts will most probably never be known. What is certain is that General Wladyslaw Sikorski, Prime Minister of the Polish Government in Exile in London, was seriously endangering Churchill's policy of cooperation and accommodation with Stalin, by demanding that the truth about the Katyn Forest massacre be made public, and by insisting on Poland's pre-1939 eastern frontier (he did not want most of the German territories which Churchill tried to palm off on him). Sikorski was killed, along with his entourage, in an airplane crash shortly after take-off from Gibraltar (the Czech pilot who had been provided him survived). This was the third "accident" in a row for Sikorski in a British aircraft; considering that he was the Head of State of an allied power, a bit sloppy. MacFarlane, the Governor of Gibraltar, afterwards said: "The Russians could not have done it," and told Madame Sikorska: "It cannot have been an accident." Still, it is possible that Sikorski's death was due to mechanical failure of the airplane. The Polish exile community in London at the time, however, was convinced that he had been killed pursuant to Churchill's orders.

Concerning another, and much more significant plot, there was at one time a good deal of controversy, but would now be difficult in the extreme to dispute the main lines of the revisionist interpretation: that Churchill conspired with Roosevelt to involve the United States in war

with Germany. There is no need to delve into details here; the interested reader may find the case summarized in Chapters Vand VI of William Henry Chamberlin's *America's Second Crusade*, and elaborated in the works of Beard, Tansill and others. Here let us simply quote from *The New York Times* of January 2, 1972: "WAR-ENTRY PLANS LAID TO ROOSEVELT. Britain Releases Her Data on Talks with Churchill. London. Jan. 1 (AP)—Formerly top secret British Government papers made public today said that President Franklin D. Roosevelt told Prime Minister Winston Churchill in August, 1941, that he was looking for an incident to justify opening hostilities against Nazi Germany . . . On Aug. 19, Churchill reported to the War Cabinet in London on other aspects of the Newfoundland (Atlantic Charter) meeting that were not made public . . . He (Roosevelt) obviously was determined that they should come in. If he were to put the issue of peace and war to Congress, they would debate it for months,' the Cabinet minutes added. 'The President had said he would wage war but not declare it and that he would become more and more provocative. If the Germans did not like it, they could attack American forces. . . Everything was to be done to force an incident.'" By the end of the year, Churchill's "higher strategy" had once again culminated in American involvement in a European war. He duly took credit for it, as well he might from his point of view; after the United States came into the war, Churchill said in a radio broadcast: "This is what I have dreamed of, animed at, worked for, and now it has come to pass."

We are entering now on to the darkest passage in a life that could boast many: Churchill's policy of the calculated terror bombing of the cities of Germany. First, let us note that, militarily, the policy was a foolish one: up until the end, it had nothing like the crushing effect on German morale that had been expected (the American bombing policy that was in operation through most of the war against Germany, of concentrating on certain industrial targets, especially oil refineries, was much more successful); and what A. J. P. Taylor calls "the British obsession with heavy bombers" led, naturally, to scarcities in other areas—for instance, of fighter planes at Singapore and landing craft at Normandy.

But besides creating technical problems for the war effort of the Allied leaders, the program also had what could be called "a human angle." About 800,000 German civilians were massacred from the air, according to the estimate of the West German government (other estimates are somewhat lower), and great cities, famous in the annals of science and art, turned into heaps of smouldering ruins. Nothing is more certain than that air war far from the front lines, with the enemy's civilians as the deliberate target, was begun after 1939 by the British, whose plans for this went back many years. In fact, high British Air Ministry officials after the war boasted of the boldness and originality of their government in pioneering this ingenious innovation. The story can be found set forth lucidly and in detail in F. J. P. Veal's extremely important book, *Advance to Barbarism*.

The whole business is one of unremitting horror, but even within it there are high-points. Thus, in March, 1942, the British Cabinet accepted the plan proposed to it by Churchill's friend and scientific advisor Professor Lindemann, whereby "top priority" in bombings was to go, not to middle-class areas, which tended to be somewhat spread out, but to working-class quarters, which were more compact and densely-populated. (Lindemann's character is superbly captured in Rolf Hochhuth's play about Churchill, *Soldiers*; here he is shown to be a repulsive ascetic, impassioned by little besides death, a brother to SS Dr. Mengele—he of the advanced medical experiments—and to Professors Frost and Wither of C. S. Lewis's *That Hideous Strength*: all devils incarnate.) Another nice twist is Anthony Eden's whining complaint that his colleagues were ignoring the "claims" of the smaller German cities to be bombed. A famous milestone in the story is the attack, on July 27-28, 1943, on residential Hamburg. The bombing and the resulting firestorm killed 42,600 people and seriously injured 37,000 others. And so we come to Dresden.

Here the reader should consult David Irving's definitive work, *The Destruction of Dresden* (Irving is by no means a thorough-going revisionist, but the facts speak for them selves). Towards the end of 1944, the British, under prodding from the Americans, had been shifting their air attacks to industrial targets. In January, 1945, however, Churchill sharply criticized his air commanders for having been unresponsive to his inquiries as to "whether Berlin, and no doubt other large cities in East Germany should not now be considered especially attractive targets."

"The immediate result of this hard reply," Irving writes, "was to stampede the Air Staff . . . into issuing an instruction to Sir Arthur Harris which would make it inevitable that the Eastern population centres, including Dresden" would now be subjected to saturation bombing. (Space is limited, I reluctantly admit, but still the reader has the right to know who Harris was: through most of the massacring of German civilians from the air, he was in charge of Bomber Command; he continually pushed for the killing of civilians, when others preferred more directly military targets; and his viewpoint on the ethics of the matter may be summed in Irving's words: "the only international restriction which he considered to be binding on him and his Command . . . was an agreement dating back to the Franco-Prussian War, which prohibited the release of explosive objects from gas-filled dirigibles; this restriction, as he pointed out, was rigidly complied with throughout the Second World War by Bomber Command"—here a whiff of the macabre humor about killing that marks the authentic sadist-murderer, reminiscent of Jacobin jokes about the guillotine. By the end of the war, Harris's name so stank that he was the only Air Commander not made a peer by the "victory"-intoxicated British Government.)

Irving points out that, as with the inhabitants of Hiroshima, the people of Dresden were pawns in a larger game. "Clearly (Churchill) had secured his immediate aim: soon after the 4th February, at the climax of the Crimea conference (Yalta), he would be able to produce a dramatic strike on an Eastern city which could hardly fail to impress the Soviet delegation" (if Dresden, why not Kiev?). As it happened, the attack had to be postponed because of weather conditions; but the Soviets doubtless got the message as the lesson of Hiroshima was also not lost on them. Americans simply have no conception of what a looming terror the Anglo-Saxon air forces have been to the peoples of the world.

To be brief: by February, 1945, Dresden contained well over one million inhabitants, including refugees. It was virtually defenseless, there being no flak batteries remaining in the city and the Luftwaffe fighter planes being largely grounded for lack of fuel. It most likely came within the definition of an open city according to the Hague Convention of 1907. What minor industrial targets Dresden contained were not marked for attack by the RAF. The blow was aimed, rather, at the residential areas. It succeeded. Probably about 135,000 persons were killed. The city's authorities had to give up hope of burying the dead and resorted to mass cremation. When the vultures escaped from the Dresden Zoo, there were some fine scenes to behold.

As the shock of horror spread in the neutral countries with access to the news (if not in New York and Washington, at least in Zurich and Stockholm, one had heard of a city named Dresden), Churchill started to panic. Cute is how he tried to get the air commanders to accept a memo implying that they had been solely responsible for the bombing (Irving, pp. 250-253; he refers there to the need to review the standing policy of "bombing German cities solely for the sake of increasing terror, though under other pretexts"—thus giving the whole game away). The memo was indignantly returned, the officers in question realizing that Churchill was using them in an attempt to clear his own name with history.

That attempt seems hopeless. The destruction of Dresden was, directly, the result of Churchill's specific request to his air commanders, and, indirectly, the outcome of his whole attitude towards the war. He had, for example, told the House of Commons, in 1943: "To achieve the extirpation of the Nazi tyranny there are no lengths of violence to which we will not go." And at the start of the war he had said of the Germans: "We will break their hearts." Well, so he did. But we may hope that in partial recompense for his great triumph, the names of Churchill and Dresden will be licked in an embrace for so long as men remember, from time to time, what States have done to human beings.

Schlafen Sie wohl, Englaender. Schlafen Sie wohl.

VI.

There are other great massacres—realized, or only projected—for which Churchill must share responsibility, as he must for the catastrophic political decisions of World War II. Let us deal with the latter first.

Churchill's admirers seem to assume that it is in the regular course of nature, a thing calling for no particular explanation, that a nation like Britain should gain its most complete military victory and simultaneously find itself in the most dangerous position in its history. But there exists by now a large body of evidence and expert opinion to the

effect that the practical defeat of England in the Second World War is largely traceable to Churchill's decisions. The root of the fateful error was Churchill's famous "single-mindedness," a not especially valuable trait in those dealing with complex issues, and certainly not in someone underaking to shape world history. When his secretary questioned him, in June, 1941, on the decision to give all-out aid to Stalin, Churchill replied: "I have only one aim in life, the defeat of Hitler, and this makes things very simple for me." In February, 1943, Franco transmitted to Churchill a memorandum warning of the dangerous spread of Russian power on the Continent. Churchill responded by ridiculing Franco's fears, adding: "I venture to prophesy that, after the war, England will be the greatest military Power in Europe. I am sure that England's influence will be stonger in Europe than it has ever been since the days of the fall of Napoleon." This fantasy of perpetual and overweening British power, then, was the foundation of Churchill's wartime policies. As Liddell Hart has said: "Britains's leader was too excited by the battle to look ahead, and see the inevitable consequence of the smashing victory for which he thirsted. It makes no sense."

The most direct expression of the demand for total, smashing victory was Roosevelt's policy, from early 1943 on, of exacting unconditional surrender from Germany, Italy and Japan (the demand was afterwards dropped in Italy's case). When Roosevelt made the announcement at Casablanca, Churchill's sycophantic reaction was to look thoughtful, grin and then say: "Perfect! And I can just see how Goebbels and the rest of 'em'll squeal!" (In fact, Goebbels considered the slogan a godsend, since it identified the German State with the Nazi regime.) The doctrine of unconditional surrender necessarily led to Communist control of East Central Europe and the Balkans, and of Manchuria and North Korea. After it had begun to work its inevitable effects, Churchill desperately tried to block them—this, ironically, is another cause for his high repute among conservatives—by pushing for invasion by Anglo-American forces of the Balkins and the Danube basin (the famous "soft underbelly of Europe"—the Italian campaign showed that concept up for the idiocy it was). Really—through all the torrent of his self-serving rhetoric, and after all his glamorizing at the hands of Luce and the rest of the establishment press is done—just what value are we to place on the political sense of someone who simply did not comprehend that the extinction of Germany and Japan as powers entailed . . . certain consequences. Is it a Metternich or a Bismarck we are dealing with here? Or is this rather a case of a Woodrow Wilson redivivus, of another Prince of Fools?

To pose a fairly basic question: what actually did Churchill believe he was fighting against in the Second World War? Was it a crusade against the diabolical Hitler of the death-camps and the medical experiments? This later, more sophisticated view of what World War II was about played no role at all in Churchill's thinking. Instead, it was a question in his mind of a "gangster" regime threatening the "liberties of Europe" (that is, the right to rule of the various parasitic regimes in the individual countries), and, equally, of—Prussian militarism! "The core of Germany is Prussia. There is the source of the pestilence . . . Nazi tyranny and Prussian militarism are the two main elements in German life which must be absolutely destroyed," he proclaimed. The Allies were battling the same mad Junker dream of world conquest, he went on to say, which had "twice within our lifetime, and three times counting that of our fathers . . . plunged the world into their wars of expansion and aggression."

This is a serious man? If his words are to be believed, Churchill's interpretation of the great epic of World War II was the one ground out by some bored French press secretary in the Washington Embassy. Forget about a tyrant and "blood-stained usurper" (as John Stuart Mill called him) named Napoleon III, who was, equally with Bismarck, responsible for the Franco-Prussian War. Forget about the Tsarist Russian imperialists and their French allies who, more than anyone else, brought about World War I. Wars are caused by Prussians, and this war is no different from any other. Thus, according to Churchill, the Second World War was no singular confrontation with the hair-raisingly demonic, as we have so often been told since, but—one can hardly grasp it—simply the third act of the old battle against the monsters of monocolored arrogance who have all along been planning for the Day when Berlioz will be replaced by Brahms and we will all be forced to eat sauerkraut at the point of a bayonet! Even the old Third Republic politician, Paul Reynaud, had a less obsolete interpretation of what the war meant when he told his

ministers in 1940: You think you have to do with Wilhelm II, but I tell you that you have to do with Ghenghis Khan. Churchill believed that fundamentally he had to do with Wilhelm II (or even Wilhelm I!), and total war, the exhaustion and eclipse of England, the plot to deceive the American people into entering the war, and all the rest—these were all justified by the burning need to—stop the Junkers!

Naturally, with this prespective, Churchill could have no sympathy with or appreciation for the heroes of the German opposition to Hitler. Even the Tory publicist, Constantine FitzGibbon, is compleased to say that, after the officers' plot of July 20, 1944, "Churchill in the House of Commons exactly echoed Goebbels's speech about the conspirators, describing them as a small clique of officers and expressing a certain satisfaction that 'dog eat dog.'" Churchill's fanatical—really, brainless—anti-Germanism blinded him to the possibility that a Germany run by Beck and Goerdeler might conceivably be more desirable from a Western point of view than one controlled either by Hitler or Stalin. And as for Prussianism, let this be said: the Prussina officer class (those mad dogs, infinitely worse, of course, than the products of Sandhurst, St. Cyr and West Point) no longer exists, and Prussia—which, after all, was Humboldt as well as Hegel—now is not even a name on a map. But Prussianism's final act was the attempt to kill Hitler and to salvage something of the honor of Germany—a not unworthy way to leave, for the last time, the stage of history. If we contrast these officers with others who were in a similar position, is it the Prussians who suffer from the comparison? It is by no means certain that Tukhachevsky and the other Red Army Marshals actually were contemplating killing Stalin; and as for Roosevelt, Truman and Churchill, there is no evidence at all that the idea ever entered the heads of their respective military subordinates.

The projected mass-murder in which Churchill had a hand was, of course, the Morgenthau Plan to demolish German industry and mining after the war, in order to turn the Germans into a peaceable agricultural and pastoral people. At the Quebec Conference of 1944, Churchill, at first reluctant to agree to the Plan, was converted when "Morgenthau pointed out that the destruction of German productive capacity would free German overseas market areas for British trade, and . . . offered England postwar credit of \$6.5 billion. The President agreed that the United States would impose no restrictions on the use of this credit" (Anne Armstrong, *Unconditional Surrender*, p. 75). Now, the millions of deaths from starvation and cold (the Plan called for flooding the coal mines of the Ruhr!) which would have resulted from its implementation surely merit placing it in the same category with certain Nazi plans for the treatment of Russia after the war (one sign of how truly staggering the concept was, is that even Stimson was horrified by it). The diplomacy of the Second World War offers few scenes as fascinating for their quality of perfectly distilled evil as the US Secretary of the Treasury, in his choking hate, trying to bribe the Prime Minister of Great Britain to consent to the genocide of the German people—and the British Prime Minister, in his frenzied greed, accepting the bribe!

While the Morgenthau Plan was never carried out (although it indirectly guided Allied policy in Germany for a couple of years), Churchill's agreement to the mass transfer of German populations westward from Pomerania, East Prussia, Silesia and Sudetenland—all German territories for many centuries—was, and it caused the deaths of some two or three millions. And we must record also that Churchill was an accomplice in Truman's decision to begin the atom bombing of the cities of Japan, and to continue putting them out, one by one, until either Japan surrendered unconditionally or there were no more Japanese, whichever came first.

Let's stop for a moment. Action said that we should judge the great actors in history by the final maxim that govern our own lives. On that basis, what do you think of someone who lived a life such that, in describing it, the fact that he was an accomplice in Hiroshima and Nagasaki is a throw-away line?

In nailing Churchill with these crimes, we are not, the reader should note, judging from any novel or arcane standard of morality spun out of the brain of a resentment-filled Jacobin or "crazy" Russian anarchist. Nor is it the title of the title, of moral rectitude that we are insisting upon, and compared to which we just happen to find Churchill wanting. We are dealing, rather, with decisions and acts that led to the deaths of millions or would have led to the deaths of other millions. It appears to us self-evident that the least of these decisions and acts would—if justice

ruled this world—in itself be enough to cause its perpetrator to be torn to pieces by a crowd.

In the midst of the Potsdam Conference, in 1945, Churchill was thrown out as Prime Minister by the British voters (he had never been popular in his own country except during the brief period of the Battle of Britain). While leader of the Opposition, his most celebrated act was helping to declare the Cold War with his famous "Iron Curtain" speech in Fulton, Missouri, in March, 1946. Europe having been left a political shambles by his very own policies, he called upon the New World to redress the balance of the Old. Naturally, the interventionists in the United States made great capital out of his warnings; Churchill by this time was looked on as practically a professional sighter of attempts-to-conquer-the-world. Not coincidentally, his own England profited from the resulting anti-Russian hysteria: a \$6 billion-plus loan in 1946, then more billions from the Marshall Plan, finally additional billions in military aid when NATO was established.

In 1951 Churchill became Prime Minister once more, with a small majority. And now the world saw what no one would have believed it could ever see: Churchill as peacemaker, Churchill warning against the dangers of another war and proposing a summit conference to work towards reconciliation between the Western powers and Russia! The key to what would otherwise be a maddening riddle lies in the fact that, shortly before, the American monopoly of nuclear weapons had been broken by the Soviet Union, and it was estimated by experts that it would require only eight hydrogen bombs to write finis to those Sceptered Isles; by the summer of 1954 Russia was thought to have more than that number. Future great wars, alas, would not be fought over the lands of Africans and Asians, nor by visiting death from the air on the peoples of the European continent. Russia technological advances made it inevitable that from now on any great war would result not in limited casualties for England (such as the 380 deaths that followed the German attack on Coventry), but in the virtual annihilation of the British race. Thus, the New Churchill. But many thought they could detect at least a touch of hypocrisy in his suggestion that the nuclear powers solemnly agree to use their weapons only against enemy troops in the field. . . and not against cities.

We will conclude this survey by observing that, in October, 1953, Churchill received the Nobel Prize for Literature, thus joining the Immortals such as Haldor K. Laxness and Juan Ramon Jimenez, other Nobel Laureates in Literature, and Pearl S. Buck (whose Prize for the pro-Chinese *The Good Earth*, had been as politically-motivated as Churchill's own). Churchill was especially commended by the Nobel Committee for having "mobilized" the English language in time of war. It was reported, though, that he had had his heart set on the Nobel Prize for Peace. Well, why not? It had, after all, been awarded to Theodore Roosevelt (of whom Charles Beard said that he was probably the only high politician in American history who believed that war was good in

itself), and afterwards it was to be bestowed on George Marshall and on Henry Kissinger. There is a school of modern literature, the Theatre of the Absurd, which would maintain—with more than a grain of truth, I think — that the world we are doomed to live in is precisely the sort of place where a Winston Churchill could receive the Nobel Prize for Peace.

VII.

Finally, a word to the reader: if this essay has seemed to you one long tirade; if you have grown weary — as I must confess I at last have — of the endless recital of wars and bloodshed; if your mind is by now dazed from the simple repetition of the words **massacre, murder, slaughter and kill** — what can I tell you? It isn't my fault; it's not my life I've been relating. Did you really think that the British Empire was the kind of campy joke American conservatives have implied it was? "No Christian annals are as sanguinary as ours," Acton said, in his cool and collected, deep-Christian way. After all, one acquires and maintains the most formidable Empire of any State in history in no other manner than by breaking human bodies and hearts. And our subject has been the Great Man who felt honored to be the humble servitor of the British State in the age of total war.

Let us try to sum up the career of this enormously influential man.

In Winston Churchill we have, above anything else, a militarist, one who yearned for even more wars than actually occurred, a jaundiced personality whose nose only began to twitch when there was bloody conflict afoot, a decadent who could refer to the years without war as "the bland skies of peace and platitude." We have a schemer clever enough to have embroiled America in two world wars in defense of the British Empire (he used our people in his plans as he might have the Greeks and the Turks), and the great master of stomach-turning Anglo-Saxon cant, the apotheosis of the tradition of Palmerston and Edward Grey, of Wilson, Stimson and Roosevelt — but nonetheless a foolish and futile politician (even from his own standpoint), one of the main destroyers of the balance of power in Europe and East Asia, and the grave-digger of the Empire of the State he served. We have a Man of Blood, whose most characteristic acts were to arrange that the *Lusitania* would be sunk, and to send the planes winging to set Hamburg and Dresden on fire — perhaps the main architect of the system of total war which yet put an end to the human race. And we have, when all is said and done as far as his beloved country is concerned, a mere social imperialist and politico without principle, in the tacky line of those who have made the England of Gladstone's time into what it is today.

Yes, truly, the Man of the Century.

For a fitting epitaph, there's a choice: either the one that seems demanded: If you seek his monument, look around. Or the one I prefer: —

He was better than Hitler.

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