

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

“Hiding behind History”: Winston S. Churchill’s  
Portrayal of the Second World War East of Suez

Being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of PhD  
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by

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**IN MEMORY OF MY FATHER,  
JOHN HENRY WILSON (1939-2008)**

\*

**THE MONDOULET SCHOLARSHIP FUND**

\*

**FOR MY MOTHER,  
BROTHER, SISTER-IN-LAW  
ALEX AND OLIVIA**

\*

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Despite all of the above assistance, any omissions or errors of fact that remain are my own.

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**“HIDING BEHIND HISTORY”: WINSTON S. CHURCHILL’S  
PORTRAYAL OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR EAST OF SUEZ.**

This thesis is an examination of Winston S. Churchill’s portrayal of the war in the Far East, as set out in his six-volume memoir *The Second World War*.<sup>1</sup> The research interrogates Churchill’s portrayal of the war against Japan through an analysis of the memoirs themselves, and against the backdrop of the post-war world. The thesis focuses on Churchill’s depiction of the advent of war with Japan; his narrative of the British Empire’s wartime losses of Hong Kong, Malaya, and Singapore; his account of the events and crises which occurred in India from 1942 to 1943; and his representation of the Indian Army and its role in the re-conquest of Burma. Close scrutiny of the memoirs—especially the way in which they were written, the draft chapters, the revisions, the proofs and galleys, reveal how he performed his historical sleight of hand—but not why.

Churchill claimed that history would be kind to him, especially as he intended to write it, but by studying the historian before studying the history the chasm between the Churchillian myth and the reality is revealed. Churchill’s self-made, interwar caricature as a die-hard Victorian imperialist backfired when it came to narrating the history of the war. His image as the British Empire’s dogged defender from the 1930s had caused significant friction during the war with the new empire he needed to court—the United States of America. If the British Empire were to continue to hold on to any semblance of power and prestige after the war, Churchill had to bend to American demands during the war. Yet when he came to write his memoirs, Churchill manipulated history so that the ‘special relationship’ would not be seen in its true light. He mythologized the ties that bound the English-speaking peoples so that the wartime ‘special relationship’ would not be revealed as temporary, transient, volatile and fragile. How he portrayed the war against Japan and why his glances eastwards were so infrequent are the subject of this thesis: how and why did Churchill hide behind the history of the war, east of Suez?

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<sup>1</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Volumes I-VI* (London: Cassell, 1948–54).

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

### PERIODICALS

<i>EconHR</i>	<i>Economic History Review</i>
<i>JCH</i>	<i>Journal of Contemporary History</i>
<i>JICH</i>	<i>Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History</i>
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Strategic Studies</i>
<i>MAS</i>	<i>Modern Asian Studies</i>
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
<i>RUSIJ</i>	<i>Royal United Services Institute Journal</i>

### CHURCHILL ARCHIVE CENTRE, CHURCHILL COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE (CCAC)

AMEL:	Leopold Amery
BEVN:	Ernest Bevin
CHAR:	Chartwell papers
CHUR:	Churchill papers
DEAK:	William Deakin
DEKE:	Dennis Kelly
EADE:	Charles Eade
HNKY:	Maurice Hankey
HRPO:	Henry Pownall
MRBS:	Michael Roberts
RCHL:	Lord Randolph Churchill
SLIM:	William Slim

### LIDDELL HART CENTRE, KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON

ISMAY:	Hastings Ismay
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‘\*’ denotes a person of interest (see Appendix)

## HIDING BEHIND HISTORY

There was no one at hand to tell me that this historian [Thomas Babington Macaulay] with his captivating style and devastating self-confidence was the prince of literary rogues, who always preferred the tale to the truth, and smirched or glorified great men and garbled documents according as they affected his drama.

Winston S. Churchill, *My Early Life: A Roving Commission* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1930).

Historians, when they have time, will select their documents to tell their stories. We have to think of the future and not of the past.

Churchill, House of Commons, 18 June 1940.

It will be found much better by all Parties to leave the past to history, especially as I propose to write that history myself.

Churchill, House of Commons, 23 January 1948.



## Introduction

On 1 October 1900, Winston Spencer Churchill (1874–1965) was elected as the Conservative and Unionist MP for Oldham. Barely three months later, he undertook a lucrative lecture tour of America.<sup>1</sup> Shortly before one lecture he was introduced to the legendary American author Mark Twain, who presented Churchill to the audience.<sup>2</sup> Twain commented that Churchill was more than ‘competent’ to talk to the audience about the Boer War, as he had ‘fought through it and wrote through it’.<sup>3</sup> Because of his fledgling literary career as a war correspondent and journalist, Churchill was already being acknowledged internationally as a man who could write about a fight he had experienced at first hand. The precedent had been set: fighting and then writing about his role in that fight was to become Churchill’s literary *modus operandi*.<sup>4</sup>

This thesis focuses upon what was arguably Churchill’s most successful fight and his most successful writing—his six-volume memoir *The Second World War*.<sup>5</sup> This thesis asks the fundamental question: why did Churchill’s memoirs pay such little attention to the war the British Empire had fought against Japan? What did Churchill’s narrative ignore or gloss over in the war east of Suez, and

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<sup>1</sup> Churchill received 12,931 votes (a majority of 222) when he was elected as Oldham’s second MP. The first MP was Mr. Emmott (a local mill owner), who stood as a Radical and received 12,947 votes.

<sup>2</sup> The lecture took place at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York on 14 Dec. 1900. See Randolph S. Churchill (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: Companion Volume I: Part 2, 1896–1900* (London: Heinemann, 1967), p. 1221–3.

<sup>3</sup> Todd Ronnei, ‘Churchill in Minnesota’, *Minnesota History*, 57/7 (2001), p. 349, citing Robert H. Pilpel, *Churchill in America, 1895–1961: An Affectionate Portrait* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), p. 39.

<sup>4</sup> Any research which examines Churchill’s Second World War memoirs owes a debt to David Reynolds. See *In Command of History: Winston Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* (London: Allen Lane, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Volumes I–VI* (London: Cassell, 1948–54).

to what extent did his portrayal of events in the Far East influence subsequent histories?

Almost five decades after his death, academic and public interest in Churchill continues unabated. In fact, there appears to be little disenchantment with the man who was named in a 2002 BBC poll as the greatest Briton of all time.<sup>6</sup> This thesis will not enter into the debates surrounding the numerous hats he wore throughout his lifetime: brick-layer, artist, family man, one-time novelist and script-writer, or even race-horse owner, to name but a few.<sup>7</sup> Instead, the thesis will primarily be concerned with his literary career, as it was his writer's hat alongside his political career which steered him towards 'history' and his portrayal of world events. Yet these three aspects of Churchill's life (his literary, political and historical hats) have all been researched before. In 2000, Eugene L. Rasor listed 3099 research items which either directly referred to Churchill or were related to him.<sup>8</sup> By 2004, Curt J. Zoller's annotated bibliography noted that

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<sup>6</sup> In a nationwide poll conducted over six weeks in 2002 by the BBC, Churchill was voted the 'greatest Briton ever'. 1,622,248 votes were cast and the final vote revealed Churchill polled 456,498 votes, beating Isambard Kingdom Brunel by more than 57,000 votes. Churchill also beat Charles Darwin, William Shakespeare, Isaac Newton, Elizabeth I, Horatio Nelson and Oliver Cromwell. See

<[http://news.bbc.co.uk/print/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2002/11\\_november/25](http://news.bbc.co.uk/print/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2002/11_november/25)>. More recently, the Campaign for Real Ale in 2011 held a vote for the prestigious title of the 'Person I would most like to have a pint with at the Great British Beer Festival'. Although Churchill did not win, he held his own amongst Oliver Reed, James May, Brian Blessed and the winner Stephen Fry. See <[http://www.camra.org.uk/article.php?group\\_id=742](http://www.camra.org.uk/article.php?group_id=742)>.

<sup>7</sup> See illustration I on p. 18. By the time Churchill was appointed Colonial Secretary in February 1921, he had worn the hats of the Board of Trade, Home Secretary, Admiralty, Ministry of Munitions, and Secretary of State for War and Air.

<sup>8</sup> Eugene L. Rasor, *Winston S. Churchill, 1874–1965: A Comprehensive Historiography and Annotated Bibliography* (West Port, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2000).

there were 684 works which were ‘entirely about’ Churchill.<sup>9</sup> Zoller also listed 929 books which contained ‘substantial data’ about Churchill, 646 articles in periodicals and lectures, and 60 dissertations and theses.<sup>10</sup>

In the last decade this list has continued to grow, illustrating how the appetite for further contributions to Churchill’s history has yet to be satiated.<sup>11</sup> In 2008, 38 pieces of research were published concerning Churchill.<sup>12</sup> They ranged from Fred Glueckstein’s amusing article ‘Cats look down on you’, to Raymond Callahan’s weightier article about Churchill’s relationship to the military.<sup>13</sup> The range in titles and content of such publications implies that researchers are now concerned with more than the ‘four faces’ of Churchill.<sup>14</sup> This leads to the

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<sup>9</sup> Curt J. Zoller, *Annotated Bibliography of Works About Sir Winston Churchill* (New York: Sharpe, 2004), pp. 3–132. Whilst the publication date is 2004, the works listed only go up to, and include, 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Zoller, *Annotated Bibliography*, pp. 133–247; pp. 249–324; and pp. 345–7. Zoller notes that the list of dissertations and theses are mostly from North American universities and colleges. See footnote 35 below for the British contingent.

<sup>11</sup> A search of the Amazon website, on 3 Oct. 2011, suggests that another four titles are due for publication before the end of 2011: Brian Farrell (ed.), *Churchill and the Lion City: Shaping Modern Singapore* (Oct. 2011); Martin Gilbert, *Winston Churchill, The Wilderness Years: A Lone Voice Against Hitler in the Prelude to War* (Dec. 2011); Robert McNamara, *The Churchills in Ireland: Controversies and Connections Since the Seventeenth Century* (Oct. 2011); and T. O. Smith, *Churchill, America and Vietnam, 1941–1945* (Oct. 2011).

<sup>12</sup> This figure was established by conducting a search of the Royal Historical Society’s database on 15 July 2009: <http://www.rhs.ac.uk/bibl>.

<sup>13</sup> Fred Glueckstein, “‘Cats look down on you...’: Churchill’s feline menagerie”, *Finest Hour: Journal of the Churchill Centre and Societies*, 139 (2008), pp. 50–3; Raymond Callahan, ‘Winston Churchill, Two Armies, and Military Transformation’, *World War II Quarterly*, 5/4 (2008), pp. 36–42.

<sup>14</sup> A.J.P. Taylor (et al), *Churchill: Four Faces and the Man* (London: Allen Lane, 1969) in which A.J.P. Taylor considered Churchill ‘The Statesman’, pp. 11–51;

question: is another piece of research on Churchill needed, or even possible? Justification for most dissertations and theses invoke familiar cries of how they present new evidence, engender fresh debate, or bridge a gap in current knowledge. Whilst this rationale is correctly employed by the majority of doctoral candidates, it falls somewhat flat when applied to the arguably ‘over-cultivated’ discussion of the life and career of Winston Churchill.<sup>15</sup> One of the latest publications, for example, concerns itself with detailing the sometimes highly elaborate wartime dinners Churchill consumed whilst conducting table-top diplomacy.<sup>16</sup> Although an interesting piece of work, *Dinner with Churchill* perhaps illustrates that Churchill studies suffer from ‘an air of exhaustion’.<sup>17</sup>

Reading Churchill’s *Second World War* is akin to picking up a *Boy’s Own* adventure novel. It is all too easy to be swept up by the spirit of defiance as France fell and Britain stood alone; to be awed by the heroics of the Battle of Britain; to be fortified by the frequently-invoked spirit of those who endured the Blitz; and to be moved by the heroism of the D-Day landings. Churchill’s literary verve and his passion remain compelling. But even a rudimentary knowledge of the course of the Second World War reveals that gaps do exist within Churchill’s narrative. What of Bomber Command? What of the Holocaust? What of General Sikorski (the leader of the exiled Polish government in London) who represented Britain’s first ally? What of the British Empire? What of the vital role played by African and Indian troops?<sup>18</sup> What of Britain’s role in perhaps antagonising

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Robert Rhodes James discussed Churchill ‘The Politician’, pp. 55–115; J.H. Plumb examined Churchill ‘The Historian’, pp. 119–51; Basil Liddell Hart debated Churchill ‘The Military Strategist’, pp. 155–202; and Anthony Storr psychoanalysed Churchill ‘The Man’, pp. 205–46.

<sup>15</sup> George Watson, *The Literary Thesis: A Guide To Research* (London: Longman, 1970), p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> Cita Stelzer, *Dinner with Churchill: Policy-Making at the Dinner Table* (London: Short Books, 2011).

<sup>17</sup> Watson, *The Literary Thesis*, p. 14.

<sup>18</sup> Publications on Indian soldiers will be referenced at length in the sixth chapter. The best publications on African soldiers are: Hal Brands, ‘Wartime recruiting practices, martial identity and post-World War II demobilization in colonial

Japan into aligning themselves with the Axis and attacking the Western powers?  
Why did Churchill weight his memoirs so heavily against these areas?

Writing in 2006, Douglas Ford commented that,

when viewed alongside the existing literature on the war against Germany, Britain's conduct of the Far Eastern conflict has not attracted much scholarly attention. This is mainly because the Asia-Pacific theatres were of secondary importance for Britain.<sup>19</sup>

Ford is correct. When the garrison at Singapore surrendered to the Japanese on 15 February 1942, Mass-Observation (MO) archives illustrate that little attention was being paid to the Far East in Britain. For example, one participant in MO, Henry Novy, commented that whilst he had 'been expecting the fall of Singapore' as the situation in the Far East was 'bad enough', it did not compare to his incredulous reaction to the 'Channel Dash' of 12 February 1942: 'when you hear the English Channel is a clear passage to three German battleships ... well!'<sup>20</sup> Understandably, a geographically more immediate threat will always

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Kenya', *Journal of African History*, 46/1 (2005), pp. 103–25; Frank Furedi, 'The demobilised African soldier and the blow to white prestige', in David Killingray and David Omissi (eds), *Guardians of Empire: The Armed Forces of the Colonial Powers, c. 1700–1964* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 179–97; Ashley Jackson, *The British Empire and the Second World War* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006); and David Killingray with Martin Plaut, *Fighting for Britain: African Soldiers in the Second World War* (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2010).

<sup>19</sup> Douglas Ford, *Britain's Secret War Against Japan, 1937–1945* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Henry Novy (1919–87) was one of Mass-Observations (MO) paid participants who, even after been drafted, continued to report for MO. Novy was also one of the first trustees appointed to the MO archive in the 1970s. Cited in Sandra Koa Wing (ed.), *Mass-Observation: Britain in the Second World War* (London: Folio, 2007), Henry Novy, 15 Feb. 1942, p. 126.

come before a more distant one. But this does not explain the lack of post-war interest in what was arguably one of the longest and hardest fought theatres of the British (as well as Allied) victory. Ford's 2006 publication dealt primarily with British intelligence matters in the Far East, and one of his aims was to firmly locate the subject of British intelligence within the general history of the Second World War instead of it retaining its extra-curricular quality. He noted how the official histories of British intelligence<sup>21</sup> argued that 'because Britain's engagement in the Far East was minor, its intelligence activities there do not demand scholarly research'.<sup>22</sup> But what compelled the official histories of the war (not only of British intelligence but also of the war in general) to downplay the war in the Far East?<sup>23</sup> One tentative answer is that it was Churchill's memoirs of the Second World War.

In the late 1960s, the Cambridge historian John Harold Plumb (1911–2001) astutely wrote that the history of 'the war, its narrative and its structure' had been 'organized in a deliberate way by Churchill'.<sup>24</sup> Plumb observed that the 'phases of the war' which Churchill had constructed in order to aid the flow of his memoirs were already deeply influencing 'subsequent historians' who found

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<sup>21</sup> See Francis H. Hinsley with E.E. Thomas, C.F.G. Ransom and R.C. Knight, *British Intelligence in the Second World War: Volumes I–II, Its Influence on Strategy and Operations* (London: HMSO, 1979–81); Hinsley with Thomas, Ransom and C.A.G. Simkins, *British Intelligence in the Second World War: Volume III, parts 1 and 2, Its Influence on Strategy and Operations* (London: HMSO, 1984–88); Hinsley and Simkins, *British Intelligence in the Second World War: Volume IV, Security and Counter-Intelligence* (London: HMSO, 1990); and Michael Howard, *British Intelligence in the Second World War: Volume V, Strategic Deception* (London: HMSO, 1990).

<sup>22</sup> Douglas Ford, *Britain's Secret War Against Japan, 1937–1945* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> The one obvious exception to this rule was produced by the Military Histories Section: Major-General S. Woodburn Kirby, *The War Against Japan: Volumes I–V* (London: HMSO, 1957–69).

<sup>24</sup> John H. Plumb, 'The Historian', in Taylor (et al), *Churchill: Four Faces*, p. 148.

themselves moving down ‘the broad avenues’ which Churchill ‘drove through war’s confusion and complexity’.<sup>25</sup> The conclusion that Plumb drew from Churchill’s history was that his ability to influence subsequent historians meant that ‘Churchill the historian lies at the very heart of all historiography of the Second World War, and will always remain there’.<sup>26</sup> Almost half a century later Plumb’s critique is as pertinent today as it was then; especially in one area—Churchill’s portrayal of the war in the Far East. The lens through which Churchill viewed the war against Japan has remained the lens through which the majority of historians have viewed it: as a sideshow, especially when compared to the war Britain fought in Europe, North Africa, and the Atlantic—or even the Russian front. This thesis adopts the framework which David Reynolds created in 2004; the comparative and contextual exercise of examining memoir and myth against the reality.

A search of the Royal Historical Society’s bibliography conducted in July 2009 reveals only three pieces of research directly related to ‘Churchill and Japan’, of which one focuses on Britain and the origins of the First World War,<sup>27</sup> one relates to Churchill and the ‘Singapore Strategy’,<sup>28</sup> and one focuses on Churchill, Japan and British security in the Pacific during the period 1904–42.<sup>29</sup> The same search facility yields only six results for ‘Churchill and Singapore’.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148–9.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>27</sup> Zara Steiner and Keith Neilson, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

<sup>28</sup> Christopher Bell, ‘The “Singapore strategy” and the deterrence of Japan: Winston Churchill, the Admiralty and the dispatch of Force Z’, *English Historical Review*, 116/467 (2001), pp. 604–34.

<sup>29</sup> Robert O’Neill, ‘Churchill, Japan and British security in the Pacific, 1904–1942’, in Roger Blake and Wm. Roger Louis (eds), *Churchill: A Major New Assessment of his Life in Peace and War* (Oxford: OUP, 1993), pp. 275–90.

<sup>30</sup> Jerome M. O’Connor, ‘Churchill and Roosevelt’s secret mission to Singapore’, *Finest Hour: Journal of the Churchill Centre and Societies*, 133 (2006–7), pp. 20–3; Karl Hack and Kevin Blackburn, *Did Singapore have to fall? Churchill and the Impregnable Fortress* (London: Routledge, 2003); Raymond Callahan,

‘Churchill and India’ produces more results (33), but fewer than half of these publications deal specifically with Churchill and India.<sup>31</sup> ‘Churchill and Empire’ produces 34 records but, once again, only a handful of these publications deal specifically with Churchill and his belief in the British Empire and his role within it.<sup>32</sup> These searches reveal that the subject matter of this thesis is an under-researched area when compared to other aspects of Churchill’s political

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‘Churchill and Singapore’, in Brian Farrell (ed.), *Sixty Years On: the fall of Singapore revisited* (Singapore: Easter University Press, 2002); Bell, ‘The “Singapore strategy” and the deterrence of Japan’; Ian Cowman, ‘Main Fleet to Singapore? Churchill, the Admiralty and Force Z’, *JSS*, 17/2 (1994), pp. 79–93; Ian Hamill, ‘Winston Churchill and the Singapore Naval Base, 1924–1929’, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 11/2 (1980), pp. 277–86.

<sup>31</sup> Auriol Weigold, *Churchill, Roosevelt and India: Propaganda During World War II* (London: Routledge, 2008); Arthur Herman, *Gandhi and Churchill: The Epic Rivalry that Destroyed an Empire and Forged our Age* (New York: Bantam, 2008); Larry Arnn, ‘India in recent historiography: Perhaps Churchill believed in real liberation’, *Finest Hour: Journal of the Churchill Centre and Societies*, 118 (2003), pp. 22–3; Philip Ziegler, ‘The Transfer of Power in India’, in R. Crosby Kemper (ed.), *Winston Churchill: resolution, defiance, magnanimity, good will* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996); Sarvepalli Gopal, ‘Churchill and India’, in Blake and Louis (eds), *Churchill*, pp. 457–72; Carl Bridge, ‘Churchill and Indian Political Freedom’, *Indo-British Review*, 13/2 (1987), pp. 26–30; M.S. Venkataramani and B.K. Shrivastava, *Roosevelt-Gandhi-Churchill: America and the Last Phase of India’s Freedom Struggle* (New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, 1983); and finally Robin James Moore, *Churchill, Cripps and India, 1939–1945* (Oxford: OUP, 1979).

<sup>32</sup> Ian St John, ‘Writing to the defence of Empire: Winston Churchill’s press campaign against constitutional reform in India, 1929–35’, in Chandrika Kaul (ed.), *Media and the British Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Ronald Hyam, ‘Churchill and the British Empire’, in Blake and Louis (eds), *Churchill*, pp. 167–86; John Barnes and David Nicholson (eds), *The Empire at Bay: The Leo Amery Diaries, 1929–1945* (London: Hutchinson, 1988); and Jackson, *The British Empire and the Second World War*.



career and life in general. Furthermore, as each search produced duplicated records, the research fields of ‘Churchill and Japan’, ‘Churchill and Singapore’, ‘Churchill and India’, and ‘Churchill and Empire’ are clearly inter-related. These have been written on closely-related matters,<sup>33</sup> but none directly deal with Churchill’s portrayal of the history of the war in the Far East. Clearly there are areas of Churchill’s life and career which retain a fascination amongst historians

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<sup>33</sup> The following are mainly British University theses (as opposed to the mainly America University theses listed by Zoller in footnote 10 above): A.J. Whitfield, ‘British Imperial consensus and the return to Hong Kong, 1941–45’, PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1998; A.D. Stewart, ‘Managing the Dominions: the Dominions Office and the Second World War’, PhD thesis, King’s College, London, 2002; R. Hirasawa, ‘Liberals and empire in Victorian Britain: a study in ideas’, PhD thesis, University of Exeter, 2005; K. Evans, ‘The development of the overseas trade of the British Empire with particular reference to the period 1870–1939’, MA thesis, University of Manchester, 1955–56; J. Reece, ‘Henry Page Croft, 1881–1947: the Empire and the Conservative Party’, MPhil thesis, University of Nottingham, 1991; A.J. Cumming, ‘The Navy as the ultimate guarantor of freedom in 1940?’, PhD thesis, University of Plymouth, 2006; N.W. Sloane, ‘The Paradox of Unity: Winston Churchill, Mackenzie King and Anglo-Canadian relations, 1940–1945’, PhD thesis, University of East Anglia, 2007; and K.C. Akora, ‘India League and India conciliation groups as factors in Indo-British relations, 1930–1949’, PhD thesis, London School of Economics, London, 1989. The following theses have all been published as books which were based on their respective research areas: I. Hamill, ‘The strategic Illusion: the Singapore Strategy and the defence of Australia and New Zealand, 1919–1942’, PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1974–75; J. Neidpath, ‘The Singapore naval base and the defence of Britain’s eastern empire, 1919–1941’, DPhil thesis, Oxford University, Oxford, 1975; F. Woods, ‘One more fight: The writings of Winston Churchill’, PhD thesis, University of Keele, Newcastle-under-Lyme, 1992; and I. Cowman, ‘Anglo-American naval relations in the Pacific 1937–1941’, PhD thesis, King’s College, London, 1989.

for further, more intricate, research.<sup>34</sup> The complex subject of Churchill's imperialism is at the heart of this thesis, which will argue that it was his imperialism, especially how it developed and then mutated, which affected his portrayal of the war with Japan in his memoirs. Furthermore, his imperialism had a huge effect on how he depicted the losses of Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore and Burma; the series of crises which occurred in India in 1942 to 1943; and the role of the Indian Army, especially in the reconquest of Burma. This thesis spans a research area which, to date, no scholar has attempted in significant depth.

The amount of research which already exists on Churchill is phenomenal. The Herculean tomes of Churchill's official biography and their accompanying companion volumes are only the beginning.<sup>35</sup> Although they appear to be quite

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<sup>34</sup> Two current pieces of research (September 2011) are by David Lough, independent scholar, on Churchill and money (most notably his relationship with the Rothschild family), and Warren Dokter, PhD candidate, University of Nottingham, on Churchill and Islam.

<sup>35</sup> Randolph S. Churchill (Winston's son) edited the first two volumes, *Winston S. Churchill: Volume I: Youth, 1874–1900* (London: Heinemann, 1966), and *Winston S. Churchill: Volume II: Young Statesman, 1901–14* (London: Heinemann, 1967), alongside the companion volumes which contain most of the documents referred to within the biography. Upon Randolph's death in June 1968, the task passed to Martin Gilbert who completed the biography with seven more volumes (each with the corresponding series of document companion volumes): *Winston S. Churchill: Volume III: The Challenge of War, 1914–1916* (London: Heinemann, 1971); *Winston S. Churchill: Volume IV: World in Torment, 1917–1922* (London: Heinemann, 1975); *Winston S. Churchill: Volume V: The Prophet of Truth, 1922–1939* (London: Heinemann, 1976); *Winston S. Churchill: Volume VI: Finest Hour, 1939–1941* (London: Heinemann, 1983); *The Churchill War Papers, Volume I: Winston S. Churchill, At The Admiralty, September 1939–May 1940* (New York: Norton, 1993); *The Churchill War Papers, Volume II: Winston S. Churchill, Never Surrender, May–December 1940* (New York: Norton, 1995); *The Churchill War Papers, Volume III: Winston S. Churchill, The Ever-Widening War, 1941* (New York: Norton, 2000); *Winston S. Churchill: Volume VII: Road to Victory, 1941–1945* (London: Heinemann,

daunting, the volumes are rather short on analysis. This however, makes their publication no less significant as they have generated leads for analysis and further research. As previously mentioned, both Rasor and Zoller have listed an inordinate amount of research on Churchill, all of which varies in scope, rigour and academic value. Clearly, only a fraction of these secondary sources can be considered within this thesis.

The principal archival source for this thesis has been the Churchill papers, held at Churchill College, Cambridge.<sup>36</sup> In particular, Churchill's literary papers (CHUR 4 and CHAR 8) as well as his post-1945 public and private correspondence (CHUR 2) have been extensively mined. Other classes of papers consulted include his speeches both pre-1945 (CHAR 9) and post-1945 (CHUR 5) and his personal papers both pre-1945 (CHAR 1) and post-1945 (CHUR 1). Other papers held at the Churchill Archive Centre, Cambridge which have been examined for this thesis include those of Leo Amery, Ernest Bevin, William Deakin, Dennis Kelly, Charles Eade, Maurice Hankey, Michael Roberts, Lord Randolph Churchill, William Slim, and Henry Pownall. (For further details see the Bibliography below.)

Whilst the Churchill Archive Centre has been the central focus for this thesis, other archives have yielded important holdings. The Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives at King's College, London holds the Ismay papers which have given a further insight into the workings of the 'syndicate'. Exeter University archive holds rare examples of Japanese anti-British, anti-Raj, but above all, anti-Churchill propaganda which filtered through India during the war. Exeter also holds papers which provide an insight into how India was viewed by a British Anglican clergyman who lived in India from 1913 to 1934 (Henry Fulford Williams); and a retired Captain in the Royal Navy, employed as a Coast

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1986); *Winston S. Churchill: Volume VIII: Never Despair, 1945–1965* (London: Heinemann, 1988).

<sup>36</sup> The Churchill Archive contains two categories of papers relating to Churchill's life. The papers which date from before 27 July 1945 (when his first term as Prime Minister ended) are known as the Chartwell Papers (CHAR), whereas the papers dating from after 27 July 1945 are known as the Churchill Papers (CHUR).

Inspector in the Chinese Maritime Customs Department, who observed the fighting between Japanese and Chinese forces in Shanghai August 1937 (Henry E. Hillman). The papers of A.L. Rowse, also at Exeter, give a clearer understanding of the workings of a renowned historian who was also a contemporary of Churchill's. The papers of Claude Auchinleck\* are held at the John Rylands University Library of Manchester, and they give a more rounded depiction of the Indian Army than Churchill's portrayal. The archive at the University of East Anglia holds the extensive papers of Solly Zuckerman. Whilst not an obvious man to include within the remit of this thesis, his papers have provided a more measured opinion on the use of atomic bombs on Japan in 1945 and the need for Britain to reassert its research capability for atomic weaponry in the post-war era. Finally, the archives at Hull History Centre contain papers which, if not directly used within this particular thesis, have proved to be useful in the formation of some of its arguments.

In the course of researching this thesis, important questions have arisen about the nature of history, memoir, myth and revisionism. To become embroiled in the debate over what is the definition of a historian, and whether Churchill can in fact be defined as one, would be detrimental to what this thesis wishes to achieve as space is at a premium. Churchill's memoirs may have been perceived as history, but the fault with this presumption may not lie entirely with Churchill. Indeed, Churchill himself noted how his memoirs were not history; they were merely 'a contribution to history' which would 'be of service to the future'.<sup>37</sup> Churchill's notion of history, his method of writing, his use of a team of highly professional researchers, drafters and advisors (otherwise known as the 'syndicate') must be addressed, as does the role the Cabinet Secretaries played in crafting the aura of semi-official pseudo-history which surrounded the memoirs. E. H. Carr advised that as 'the facts of history never come to us pure', it is essential to 'study the historian before you begin to study the facts'.<sup>38</sup> His counsel remains pertinent—so we ought to study Churchill the memoirist before

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<sup>37</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Volume I: The Gathering Storm* (London: Cassell, 1948), p. vii.

<sup>38</sup> E. H. Carr, *What Is History?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1961; repr., 2001), p. 16; p. 17.

studying Churchill's memoirs. But should a memoirist be subject to the same level of scrutiny as a historian? Is a certain amount of distortion of truth or mythologizing either 'allowed' or even expected in memoirs? Are the boundaries which separate memoir and history fixed so that never the twain shall meet? Is it a case of memoir *or* history and not memoir *as well as* history? In short, does one exclude the other? These questions will be the subject of the first chapter. As the thesis progresses, and as the original question of Churchill's weighting against Japan and the war in the Far East is answered, the issues of memoir, history, revisionism, myth and the grey areas that lie in-between will continue to be addressed.

The second chapter examines Churchill's particular notion of the British Empire, and what 'imperialism' meant to him. The chapter briefly charts the key developmental stages of his imperialism before 1931, until his grand gesture over India consigned himself to the back benches of the Commons.<sup>39</sup> This chapter emphasizes the distinction between Churchill's genuine pre-1931 imperialism, and the more rhetorical imperialism which he purposely cultivated in order for his presence on the political scene in the 1930s to remain undimmed. His exaggerated imperialism of the 1930s was much like his party politics—it was a mantle he wore when it suited him. But his rhetorical imperialism became so heavy in the immediate years after the war that when it came to writing his memoirs, he abandoned it and chose an Anglo-American rhetoric instead.<sup>40</sup> Churchill's image as the imperial bulldog may have been a useful weapon in his personal arsenal during the 1930s. It was perhaps even more useful when

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<sup>39</sup> Churchill resigned from his position in the Shadow Business Cabinet on 28 January 1931 over the possibility of granting self-government to India (one of the central tenets contained within the proposed India Act). Churchill's tension over this proposal had been mounting since Stanley Baldwin\* had declared that the Conservatives would back the Irwin Declaration of October 1929.

<sup>40</sup> So convincing was Churchill's image as the ardent imperialist that in 1952, when Churchill addressed the American houses of Congress, a Congressman's wife remarked that she had 'felt that the British Empire was walking into the room', Ashley Jackson, *Churchill* (London: Quercus, 2011), p. 351, citing Alistair Cooke, *Manchester Guardian*.

wartime imperial dynamism was flagging and needed fortifying. But Churchill's caricature as the tenacious imperial bulldog was so effective however, that when it came to writing about an imperial power which he had drastically underrated, and one which had temporarily but dramatically bested the British imperial lion, he twisted the facts to suit his tale. Churchill famously claimed that he had not 'become the King's First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire'.<sup>41</sup> He turned out to be wrong.

Chapter Three considers how Churchill portrayed the advent of war in the Far East and clarifies the distinction Churchill made between the short and long-term reasons for the long road to Pearl Harbor. At first, placing the onus for the outbreak of the war with Japan firmly at America's feet comes as a surprise, especially as Churchill was so keen to return to Downing Street, and was reliant upon maintaining the Anglo-American relationship which he had so carefully nurtured throughout the war. However when his reasoning is contextualised, and the brevity with which he listed the British perspective is examined, the reasons for the infrequency of Churchill's eastward glances become more obvious.

The fourth chapter focuses on Churchill's narrative of the loss of Hong Kong, Malaya, and Singapore. It is in this chapter that the idea of 'sacrifice for salvation' east of Suez will be explored fully and its implications and ramifications not only upon Churchill's sense of the British Empire (and the progress of the war itself), but also on the 'special relationship' which he had taken great pains to foster. This chapter highlights the extent to which Churchill's portrayal of the war in the Far East—especially the loss of Hong Kong and Singapore—became cemented within official histories, when really he exaggerated them to prevent closer scrutiny of his own role in their sacrifice. Subsequently Churchill drastically watered down his postwar imperial rhetoric, because the Attlee government had clawed back the economically viable Hong Kong and the strategically important Singapore naval base. Because Burma's wartime conditions had exacerbated internal political tensions and destroyed its infrastructure, Attlee willingly jettisoned the postwar imperial disaster zone

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<sup>41</sup> Churchill, Mansion House speech, London, 10 Nov. 1942, in Robert Rhodes James (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches: Volume VI, 1935–1942* (New York: Chelsea House, 1974), p. 6695.

which Burma had become. Had Churchill been in power he would have had to do the same. More worryingly for Churchill though, he would have done so gladly. Such a dent to his already elegiac imperialism could not be revealed in his memoirs.

Chapter Five analyses Churchill's rendition of the series of crises he had to contend with in India during 1942–43. Plumb's observation about Churchill's unerring ability to straighten out the chaos and confusion of the Second World War faltered when Churchill had little choice but to outline the situation in India. His memoirs show little cohesion or forethought for continuity when the subject of India and 1942 to 1943 rears its head. When Churchill attempted to lay out the history of the British Empire in India, the chaos and confusion of that history worked to his advantage as it enabled him to gloss over his mistakes, and to diffuse the impact of this period of 'shocks and change'.<sup>42</sup> India had always been Churchill's 'blind spot',<sup>43</sup> and this tainted his interpretation of the failure of the Cripps Mission, the Quit India campaign, the search for a new Viceroy, and the Bengal famine of 1943. Churchill's almost vitriolic distaste for India highlights how loathe he was to admit his own culpability and his share of responsibility for the eventual loss of the jewel in the British Empire's crown. Rather unexpectedly, Churchill directed as much scorn towards Roosevelt's opinion on the Raj as he did towards the Indian nationalists themselves. In so doing, Churchill arguably hoped to distract the reader from the reality of the situation: not only his own role in the ultimate death knell of the Raj but also just how fragile and temporary the wartime Anglo-American alliance had actually been. American anti-imperial pressure proved exhausting for Churchill both during the war and, once again, when revisiting wartime India for his memoirs.

The sixth and final chapter examines Churchill's portrayal of the Indian Army and especially its role in the reconquest of Burma. The series of crises which gripped India from 1942 to 1943 exacerbated Churchill's postwar bitterness. In particular his postwar thinking contaminated his portrayal of the

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<sup>42</sup> CHAR 20/99B/172: Churchill's speech, farewell dinner in honour of Wavell taking up his post as Viceroy of India, London, 6 Oct. 1943.

<sup>43</sup> Penderel Moon (ed.), *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal* (Karachi: OUP, 1974), Wavell quoting Mountbatten, 30 Sept. 1943, p. 21.

Indian Army and its role in Burma—arguably the most gruelling theatre of the war east of Suez. Churchill may have praised and lauded the Indian Army more frequently than other imperial troops, but only when justifying why constitutional redress for India was impossible during wartime. As Churchill was composing his forever forward-looking memoirs, most of the wartime cankers had healed. But Burma still blighted Churchill's record as it exposed the temporary, transient and fragile nature of the Anglo-American alliance.

Through the medium of his memoirs, Churchill intended to glorify his recent past and underpin his eagerly anticipated future. In itself this is neither surprising nor a revelation. Many political memoirs have these, or similar, considerations as their over-riding impetus. What this thesis highlights is the way in which Churchill's memoirs have been constantly evidenced as history.<sup>44</sup> In fact, as far as the war with Japan is concerned, Churchill's memoirs still hold sway over official histories. Churchill's *Second World War* should be re-evaluated in light of the context in which it was written. Churchill himself wrote that his memoirs were nothing more than a contribution to history which would be of service to future historians. It is time historians took an unsentimental view of Churchill's memoirs, and accepted that the influence which he had, in this instance, on the depiction of the war in the Far East was far from accurate. Churchill may have relegated the war against Japan to a sideshow, to a distraction, but this does not excuse those who have followed his lead. The Second World War was indeed a *world* war. It was arguably a war of empires. One of the larger conclusions drawn from this research is how no history of the Second World War has yet incorporated all aspects of the tale. Perhaps a Herculean task, but one which nonetheless suggests that a fresh perspective should be given to the Second World War. Historians of the twenty-first century

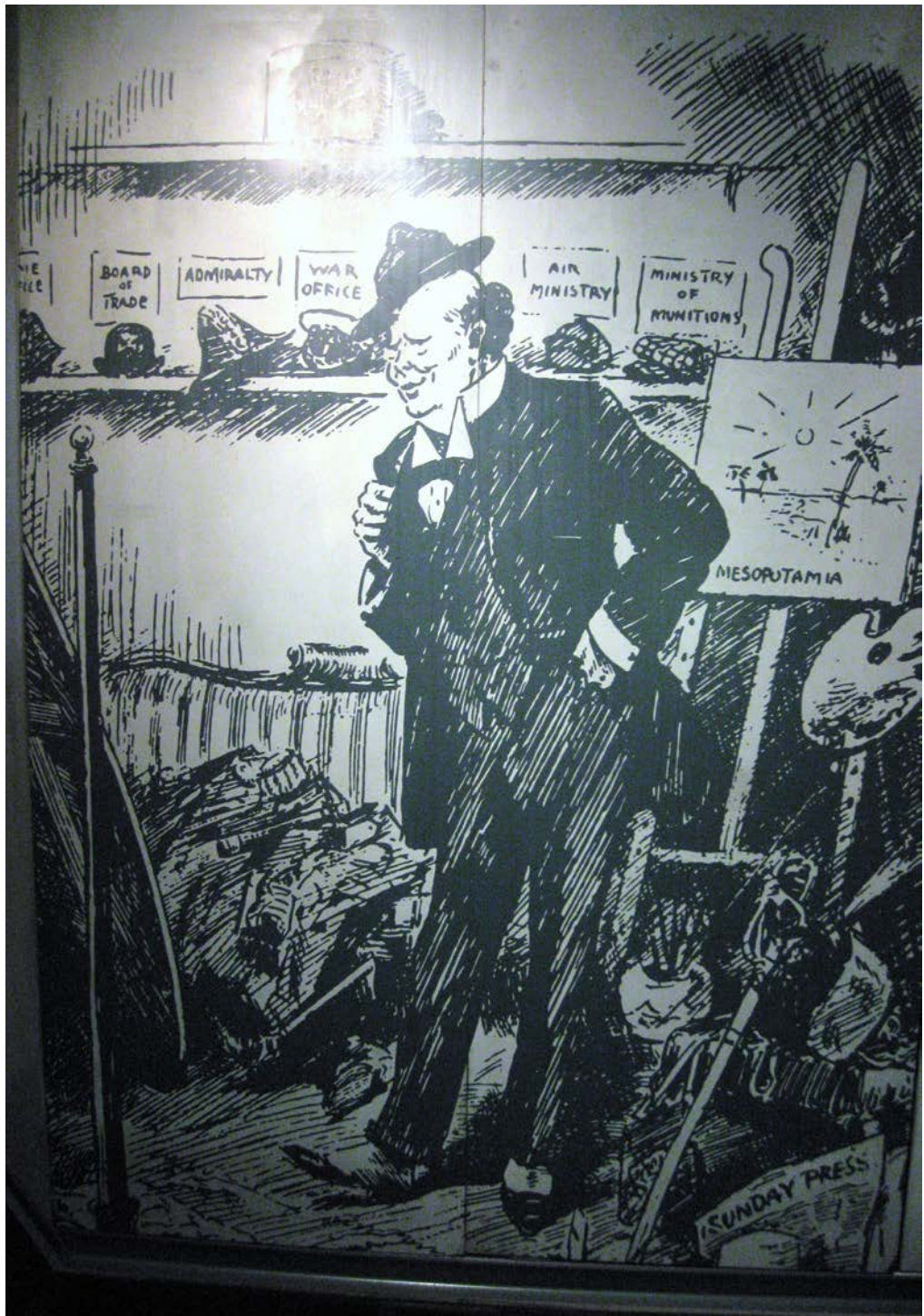
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<sup>44</sup> Only recently, David Edgerton and Dan Todman both agreed that certain assumptions about Britain and the Second World War (in particular the 'Blitz spirit' and the notion of a 'Peoples War') still held sway over both academe and national consciousness. Both academics commented upon how instrumental Churchill's *Second World War* had been with regards to these and other assumptions. Plenary session of the 'Fresh Perspectives on Britain in World War Two' conference, Imperial College, London, 9 Nov. 2011.



must widen the scope, and one of the least-researched areas is the lens through which Churchill viewed the Far East and the extent to which he influenced subsequent histories.

Illustration I



“Hats that helped me’: ‘Mr Winston Churchill (trying on Colonial headgear),

‘Very becoming—but on the small side, as usual’.

*Punch*, 26 January 1921.

## Chapter I: Between Memoir and History

During his ‘wilderness years’ Churchill had been subjected to criticism, scorn and, at times, derision within the Commons.<sup>1</sup> Six weeks after the outbreak of war, and having returned to the Admiralty, Churchill received a letter from Colin Thornton-Kemsley (the Conservative MP for Kincardine and West Aberdeenshire). The MP apologised for having opposed Churchill for as long and ‘as hard as’ he ‘knew how’, and for not having listened to his repeated warnings about the ‘German danger’.<sup>2</sup> ‘Englishmen ought to start fair with one another from the outset in so grievous a struggle’, Churchill answered, and that as far as he was concerned ‘the past’ was ‘dead’.<sup>3</sup> But the past was never really dead for Churchill. At the same time as he sent this reply he was being approached by publishers, all vying for his attention (and signature) over what they realised would be a great piece of writing.<sup>4</sup> Churchill was 65 years old and if he lasted through the war, in whatever position, it was expected that he would write about his role in the fight as was his habit.<sup>5</sup>

This brief opening chapter contextualises Churchill’s literary empire, and begins to examine the interplay between memoir and history in relation to Churchill’s *Second World War*.<sup>6</sup> Churchill said of his memoirs, ‘this is not

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<sup>1</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Volume I: The Gathering Storm* (London: Cassell, 1948), p. 527.

<sup>2</sup> Colin Thornton-Kemsley to Churchill, 17 Sept. 1939 in Martin Gilbert (ed.), *The Churchill War Papers: Volume I: At the Admiralty, September 1939–May 1940* (New York: Norton, 1993), p. 51–2.

<sup>3</sup> Churchill to Thornton-Kemsley, 13 Sept. 1939, in *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>4</sup> See David Reynolds, *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), p. 5–22.

<sup>5</sup> See Winston S. Churchill, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force: An Episode of Frontier War* (London: Longman, 1898); *My Early Life: A Roving Commission* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1930); and *The World Crisis: Volumes I–V* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1923–31).

<sup>6</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Volumes I–VI* (London: Cassell, 1948–54).

history, this is my case'.<sup>7</sup> He also knew that, as time progressed, the 'flickering lamp' of history would throw a different light on his own life and career.<sup>8</sup> Just as Churchill was aware that 'fierce and bitter controversies' had haunted Neville Chamberlain, he was aware that controversies would undoubtedly plague his own reputation when he died.<sup>9</sup> In order therefore to counteract any controversies whilst he was alive, and to smooth his hoped-for return to 10 Downing Street, Churchill wrote his memoirs. His wife Clementine wrote 'when History looks back your vision & your piercing energy coupled with your patience & magnanimity will all be part of your greatness'.<sup>10</sup> Indeed it would, but if Churchill could embellish that greatness through his writing—so much the better.

Throughout his life, Churchill earned a sizable proportion of his income from writing.<sup>11</sup> His literary career began at the end of the nineteenth century when he became a wartime correspondent in Cuba in 1895, and continued a year later in Egypt and then in South Africa during the Boer War. His articles were favourably received and this prompted him to view writing as not only a way of bolstering his constantly fluctuating income, but also of proselytising his own opinions. Writing about the reviews his *Malakand Field Force* had received, Churchill noted

That was the stuff! I was thrilled. I knew that if this would pass muster there was lots more where it came from, and I

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<sup>7</sup> Sir William Deakin in conversation with Martin Gilbert, 15 Mar. 1975 in Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, 1945–1965: Volume 8, Never Despair* (London: Heinemann, 1988), p. 315.

<sup>8</sup> Hansard, HC (series 5) vol. 365, col. 1617 (12 Nov. 1940).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Mary Soames (ed.), *Speaking for Themselves: The Personal Letters of Winston and Clementine Churchill* (London: Black Swan, 1999), Clementine to Churchill, 23 Nov. 1943, p. 486.

<sup>11</sup> See David Reynolds, 'Churchill's Writing of History: Appeasement, Autobiography and "The Gathering Storm"', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, 11 (2001), p. 221; and *In Command of History*, pp. 13–22.

felt a new way of making a living and of asserting myself,  
opening splendidly out before me.<sup>12</sup>

The money he earned from writing meant that, even though he constantly complained of being ‘oofless’ (cash poor), he nonetheless had a reasonably regular source of revenue.<sup>13</sup> As his inability to be parsimonious with his own funds became habitual, he ‘resolved to build a small literary house’ to supplement what he saw as a meagre income.<sup>14</sup> Money was one reason why Churchill wrote. The other reason for continuing his literary career alongside his later political career was the way in which it afforded him a platform from which he could vent his opinions, justify his beliefs and actions, or present alternative scenarios to those which he felt were historically inaccurate. In short, Churchill was conscious of how historical perspectives were apt to, and could, be changed.

Churchill first experienced the power that historical writing held when he attempted to silence his late father’s detractors by means of writing his biography.<sup>15</sup> Whilst not entirely successful in his remit, Churchill did at least quell some of the harsher criticisms which had been levelled against Lord Randolph Churchill. But as one historian noted, ‘as a vindication *Lord Randolph Churchill* does not succeed, as a great political history it does’.<sup>16</sup> Churchill’s most forceful early encounter with the power of history however, was his multi-volume narrative on the First World War—*The World Crisis*.<sup>17</sup> To date only one historian

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<sup>12</sup> Churchill, *My Early Life*, p. 170.

<sup>13</sup> Churchill to his mother Lady Jennie Churchill, 19 May 1891, in Randolph S. Churchill (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: Companion Volume I, Part 1: 1874–1896* (London: Heinemann, 1967), p. 234.

<sup>14</sup> Churchill, *My Early Life*, p. 168. Churchill’s meagre income was a combination of the pay he received as a subaltern in the Queen’s Fourth Hussars (he was stationed in Bangalore, India from 1896–9) and contributions from his mother.

<sup>15</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill: Volumes I–II* (London: Macmillan, 1906).

<sup>16</sup> John Lukacs, *Churchill: Visionary. Statesman. Historian.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 109.

<sup>17</sup> Churchill, *The World Crisis*.

has tackled the *World Crisis*, and has concluded that whilst the commitment needed to complete such a work was intense, and its ‘thread of humanity’ reflected its author’s awareness of the horrors of the new age of warfare, it was nonetheless a piece of historical writing which contained ‘distortions and lack of balance’.<sup>18</sup> The first line of Churchill’s preface to the fourth volume, *The Aftermath*, noted that it had taken him almost ten years to write his ‘contemporary contribution to the history of the Great War’.<sup>19</sup> While Churchill clearly thought of his narrative of the First World War as a ‘contribution’ to history, a phrase which he would use once again in the preface to his first volume of memoirs on the Second World War,<sup>20</sup> the ‘distortions’ within the narrative suggest that A.J. Balfour\* was perhaps correct to describe the *World Crisis* as Churchill’s autobiography disguised as world history.<sup>21</sup>

Churchill wrote the *World Crisis* between 1919 and 1926. During this time his political career had regained some of its pre-Dardanelles vigour and he had been Secretary of State for War and Minister of Air (15 January 1919–14 February 1921 and 1 April 1921 respectively), Secretary of State for the Colonies (14 February 1921–October 1922), almost two years out of office, and then Chancellor of the Exchequer (7 November 1924–30 May 1929). Perhaps his desire to justify his role in the Dardanelles strategy increased the verve with which he wrote his narrative, and this possibly accounts for the relatively short period before the first volume was published. Despite his protestation to the contrary, Churchill’s literary output seems not to have been unduly affected by his political offices.<sup>22</sup> Understandably however, when he entered the ‘political wilderness’ in 1931 his literary production rate increased exponentially.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Robin Prior, *Churchill’s World Crisis as History* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1983), p. 283.

<sup>19</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The World Crisis: Volume IV, The Aftermath* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1929; Folio edn, 2007), p. xi.

<sup>20</sup> Churchill, *Gathering Storm*, p. vii.

<sup>21</sup> As cited by Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> In the preface to his third volume of *The World Crisis*, Churchill wrote that the ‘material had been assembled, the work studied and planned, and the greater part actually finished’ when he had been invited back to government as Chancellor of

It was during the period from 1931 to 1939 that he ‘undertook his greatest literary task’—the four volume *Marlborough*.<sup>24</sup> The intention behind this study of his ancestor was to ‘give a more just and generous judgement’ on John Churchill, First Duke of Marlborough.<sup>25</sup> Churchill was ‘determined from the first to make the best case he could’ for Marlborough, and exclusive access to papers and documents in the muniment room at Blenheim Palace helped Churchill’s narrative become a cohesive historical tale.<sup>26</sup> But what Churchill actually wrote was more than a political biography of his ancestor. In Churchill’s words, *Marlborough* was also a description of ‘how the harsh and excessive demands of the victors [had] produced innumerable and unforeseen consequences for the defeated nations’.<sup>27</sup> In other words, *Marlborough* was Churchill’s warning from history—it was arguably his implicit treatise against the consequences of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles. The volumes received ‘critical acclaim’,<sup>28</sup> and Churchill succeeded in restoring Marlborough’s ‘good name’.<sup>29</sup> Churchill’s literary career preceded his entry into Parliament by four years. He honed his journalistic and literary skills to help establish his political position, to rally support for whatever cause he

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the Exchequer in 1924. The ‘weight’ of his official duties, so Churchill continued, ‘forced’ him to put his ‘literary projects indefinitely aside’ until mid 1926.

Winston S. Churchill, *The World Crisis: Volume III, 1916–1918* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1927; Folio edn, 2007), p. xi.

<sup>23</sup> Churchill, *Gathering Storm*, p. 527.

<sup>24</sup> CHAR 20/3/94: ‘Mr. Churchill as a Writer’, script of broadcast to India by Leo Amery, 6 Dec. 1940; Winston S. Churchill, *Marlborough: His Life and Times, Volumes I-IV* (London: Harrap, 1933–38).

<sup>25</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *Marlborough: His Life and Times, Volume I* (London: Harrap, 1933; Folio Society, edn, 1991), p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Maurice Ashley, *Churchill as Historian* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1968), p. 138.

<sup>27</sup> Morton J. Frisch, ‘The Intention of Churchill’s “Marlborough”’, *Polity*, 12/4 (1980), p. 562.

<sup>28</sup> Ashley Jackson, *Churchill* (London: Quercus, 2011), p. 232.

<sup>29</sup> DEKE 5: ‘Churchill as Historian’, Lecture given by Denis Kelly to the Middle Temple History Society, London, 13 Jan. 1982, p. 14.

subscribed to, and to augment his constantly fluctuating personal finances. Yet none of this explains why Churchill's memoirs of the Second World War acquired the status of semi-official history, let alone the way in which they indelibly shaped the history of the Second World War.

Anyone who researches Churchill's *Second World War* owes a debt to David Reynolds, whose *In Command of History* clarified why Churchill wrote his memoirs, explained how they were physically constructed, and set them against the contextual background of a hot war turning into a Cold one.<sup>30</sup> Churchill did not write his memoirs due to the vanity of age. He wrote his memoirs (although compiled and edited are perhaps more apt terms) to increase his chances of a return to 10 Downing Street.<sup>31</sup> In writing his 'contribution to history', Churchill hoped that he would either appease or silence his critics before they could hinder his return to power.<sup>32</sup> One historian wrote that Churchill's political actions after his defeat in the general election of July 1945 'added little to his stature' but that 'his history' of the war 'lent lustre to his fame'.<sup>33</sup> It was this lustre which (if he embellished it enough) would possibly help him become a peacetime prime minister. Having recovered from his landslide defeat in the general election of

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<sup>30</sup> Only recently Reynolds's *In Command of History* has once again been lauded as required reading alongside Churchill's *Second World War*. See David Edgerton, *Britain's War Machine: Weapons, Resources and Experts in the Second World War* (London: Allen Lane, 2011), fn. 1, p. 303. Raymond Callahan wrote that Reynolds's *In Command of History* is 'one of the most important books yet produced about Churchill'. See Raymond Callahan, 'In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War', *Journal of Military History*, 70/2 (2006), p.551.

<sup>31</sup> David Reynolds, 'Churchill's Writing of History: Appeasement, Autobiography and "The Gathering Storm"', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, 11 (2001), pp. 221–47.

<sup>32</sup> Churchill, *Gathering Storm*, p. vii.

<sup>33</sup> John Charmley, *Churchill: The End of Glory: A political biography* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1993), p. 647.



July 1945,<sup>34</sup> having revived his international presence on a lecture tour of America in early 1946,<sup>35</sup> and having successfully negotiated the all-important tax position regarding any profits he would make by picking up a pen again,<sup>36</sup> Churchill resolved to compose his memoirs.<sup>37</sup> His intention to do so had been evident much earlier than the aftermath of what his wife deemed to be perhaps ‘a blessing in disguise’.<sup>38</sup> In spite of Churchill having instructed one of his secretaries, in August 1945, to respond politely but negatively to several quite persistent telegrams enquiring as to not *whether* he would write his memoirs but *when* he would start them, Churchill had already broadcast his intention to record his memoirs within a month of becoming Prime Minister.<sup>39</sup> After France had fallen, Churchill told the Commons that Britain could ill afford any ‘utterly futile and even harmful’ recriminations regarding the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk.<sup>40</sup> In this speech, Churchill expressed the view that the whys and wherefores of Operation Dynamo (the codename for the Dunkirk evacuation) had to be put aside. It had to be ‘put on the shelf, from which the historians, when they have time, will select their documents to tell their stories’.<sup>41</sup> Churchill, however, thought that he would be one of the historians.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Labour won 393 seats, the Conservatives and their supporters 210, and the Liberals 12 seats. Labour made 203 gains and had a majority of 159 seats over all other parties. Kenneth O. Morgan, *Labour in Power, 1945–1951* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), p. 41.

<sup>35</sup> See John Ramsden, *Man of the Century: Winston Churchill And His Legend Since 1945* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, London: HarperCollins, 2003), pp. 154–62; and Reynolds, *In Command of History*, pp. 41–8.

<sup>36</sup> See Reynolds, *In Command of History*, pp. 49–50.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 13–35; 49–63.

<sup>38</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Volume VI: Triumph and Tragedy* (London: Cassell, 1954), p. 583.

<sup>39</sup> Martin Gilbert (ed.), *Winston Churchill and Emery Reves: Correspondence, 1937–1964* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), Kathleen Hill to Emery Reves, 2 Aug. 1945, p. 250–51.

<sup>40</sup> Hansard, HC (series 5) vol. 362, col. 51 (18 June 1940).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

This simple sentence begs a complicated answer to the following question: was Churchill an historian?

Churchill's concept of 'history' was 'essentially a personal and family affair'.<sup>43</sup> He believed that history was irrevocably tied up with politics, was made by great individuals, who were, more often than not, men of destiny operating under a grand theme. The grand theme which Churchill visited and revisited time and again was the British Empire. The 1920s and 30s were a golden age for travel and travel writing.<sup>44</sup> European frontiers may have owed much to the post-Great War treaties and may have caused the traveller some distress (at least as far as the issue of passport control was concerned),<sup>45</sup> but this era further opened up British eyes to a world beyond Dover—a world that was crucial to Churchill as it was a world in which the British Empire took centre stage. By 1945 however, the British Empire was beginning its final descent and British literature began to reflect this withdrawal as it became concerned with all things British. Literature started to look inwards and became comparably insular. Churchill's *Second World War* tapped into this need to concentrate and refocus on Britain. Three days after he became Prime Minister, Churchill had warned the British people that 'victory' could be theirs, but it would come at a price—it would be 'victory at all costs'.<sup>46</sup> 'Conscious of the consequences of the decline of empire', Churchill's memoirs encapsulated the collective psychological need to be victorious—not only

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<sup>42</sup> The more commonly quoted remark, how Churchill announced that history would be kind to him, especially as he intended to write it, is still powerful, but not as portentous as some have claimed. After all, he had already been approached (as early as September 1939 when he returned to the Admiralty) by several publishers for first refusal on any memoirs he chose to write at the end of the war. See Reynolds, *In Command of History*, pp. 5–7.

<sup>43</sup> Ashley, *Churchill as Historian*, p. 13; Reynolds, 'Churchill's Writing of History', p. 221.

<sup>44</sup> See Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Travelling between the Wars* (Oxford: OUP, 1980; 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 1982).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31–6.

<sup>46</sup> Hansard, HC (series 5) vol. 360, col. 150 (13 May 1940).

alongside their Allies, or over the Axis powers, but also victorious over their own fortunes, and over their own history.<sup>47</sup>

Until Reynolds published his Wolfson prize-winning work, *In Command of History*, Churchill's method of writing history had been systematically discussed by only a handful of people.<sup>48</sup> Instead of physically writing his memoirs, Churchill preferred to have his secretaries type up his dictated recollections of key events which he would then annotate when he was ready.<sup>49</sup> He would trawl through wartime telegrams and Minutes, a process the syndicate called 'strigging', which enabled him to string ideas and recollections together.<sup>50</sup> He was also in the enviable position of being able to hire a team of researchers (a method which he had first employed with successful results during the interwar years), who became known as the 'syndicate'. At first glance the members of the syndicate appeared to be an unlikely and disparate team (made up of historians, wartime colleagues and close friends of Churchill's) but this disparity belied a tremendous effort and complete loyalty to Churchill's narrative. First and foremost was the professional historian Frederick William (Bill) Deakin who had previously been employed by Churchill from 1935 to 1938 as a researcher for

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<sup>47</sup> Fussell, *Abroad*, p. 20.

<sup>48</sup> Keith Alldritt, *Churchill The Writer: His Life as a Man of Letters* (London: Hutchinson, 1992); Ashley, *Churchill as Historian*; Lukacs, *Churchill*; Prior, *Churchill's World Crisis as History*; Manfred Weidhorn, *Sword and Pen: A Survey of the Writings of Sir Winston Churchill* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974); and Frederick Woods, *Artillery Of Words: The Writings of Sir Winston Churchill* (London: Leo Cooper, 1992).

<sup>49</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 69. There are several examples of Churchill's dictated reminiscences before starting any of which he could easily have uttered to one of his secretaries, 'My dear, I shall require you to stay extremely late. I am feeling very fertile tonight'. Lord Boyd of Merton to David Dilks, cited by Richard M. Langworth (ed.), *Churchill's Wit: The Definitive Collection* (London: Ebury, 2009), p. 85.

<sup>50</sup> ISMAY 2/3/159: Pownall to Ismay, 15 June 1949.

both *Marlborough* and the *History of the English-Speaking Peoples*.<sup>51</sup> Denis Kelly became the syndicate's next foundation stone. He had been an unenthusiastic lawyer whom Churchill employed as a literary assistant (in 1947), in order to create a 'cosmos out of chaos'.<sup>52</sup> Three years later in 1950 Kelly may have been describing himself as 'the junior, unqualified stooge' of the syndicate, but his humility belied the great contribution he made to the memoirs—not least of which was his ability to keep the paperwork in some semblance of order.<sup>53</sup> Churchill's lack of interest in organising paperwork was well known amongst the syndicate. Once, whilst the syndicate were in full research mode, Pownall commented that in order to keep much sought after telegrams and documents from becoming lost, Churchill should perhaps be provided with copies because 'you know what happens to papers chez lui'.<sup>54</sup> Formidable military knowledge came from a wide circle of Churchill's wartime colleagues, yet he relied mostly upon General Henry Pownall, General 'Pug' Ismay and Commodore Allen. Close personal friends, such as Frederick Lindemann and Edward Marsh, were willing and valued proof readers.

Yet having a syndicate did not make Churchill an historian. Malcolm Muggeridge (a contemporary journalist and broadcaster) wrote that the syndicate illustrated how adept Churchill was at 'organising large works' and that 'his' memoirs were 'the productions of a committee rather than of an individual

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<sup>51</sup> Churchill, *Marlborough*. Whilst published in the mid to late 1950s his *A History of the English Speaking Peoples, Volumes I–IV* (London: Cassell, 1956–58) was researched and mainly written during the 1930s when Churchill was in his political wilderness.

<sup>52</sup> On introducing Kelly to his papers, Churchill said 'Your task, my boy, is to make cosmos out of chaos': see Allen Packwood (ed.), *Cosmos out of Chaos: Introducing the Churchill Archives Centre* (Cambridge: Churchill College, 2009), p. 4.

<sup>53</sup> CHUR 4/25A/7: Kelly to Sir Guy Garrod, 24 Nov. 1950.

<sup>54</sup> ISMAY 2/3/50/1: Pownall to Ismay, 10 May 1948.

author'.<sup>55</sup> In one sense Muggeridge was correct. At times Churchill would recruit experts in the relevant field to write draft chapters which would remain largely unchanged.<sup>56</sup> For example, when Churchill reached the chronological point of the Battle of Britain in the memoirs, he recalled an 'admirable pamphlet ... called Air Ministry Pamphlet 156', and thought that the author could prove 'very helpful' to him by 'constructing the short but accurate condensation' which Churchill required.<sup>57</sup> Ismay established through 'private channels' that 'the man who did most of the work' was not Sir Robert Brooke-Popham (as was originally thought) but Flight-Lieutenant Albert Goodwin.<sup>58</sup> Ismay approached Goodwin (by then a Professor of History at Jesus College, Cambridge),<sup>59</sup> who was 'honoured to hear that Mr. Churchill had been interested' in the pamphlet.<sup>60</sup> Thus whilst Muggeridge, to a certain degree, was correct, the memoirs were still authored by Churchill. He directed the syndicate. He directed the work as a whole. He dictated his recollections of key events which the syndicate fleshed out.<sup>61</sup> As Churchill himself wrote, 'these chapters are merely a provisional build-up. Please do

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<sup>55</sup> Malcolm Muggeridge, 'Churchill the Biographer and Historian', in Charles Eade (ed.), *Churchill: By His Contemporaries* (London: Hutchinson, 1953; repr. Reprint Society, 1955), p. 237.

<sup>56</sup> See Reynolds, *In Command of History*, pp. 186–8, regarding Goodwin's employment by Churchill.

<sup>57</sup> ISMAY 2/3/19: Churchill to Ismay, 22 Nov. 1946.

<sup>58</sup> ISMAY 2/3/20: Ismay to Churchill, 25 Nov. 1946.

<sup>59</sup> ISMAY 2/3/23: Ismay to Goodwin, 29 Nov. 1946.

<sup>60</sup> ISMAY 2/3/24: Goodwin to Ismay, 2 Dec. 1946.

<sup>61</sup> At times Churchill (or a member of the syndicate) would recruit experts in the relevant field to write draft chapters which would remain largely unchanged. For example see ISMAY 2/3/19: Churchill to Ismay, 22 Nov. 1946. A further example would be Pownall recruiting Sir Guy Garrod (at Churchill's behest) to help write the chapter on 'The Mounting Air Offensive'. See CHUR 4/25A/14–15: Pownall to Churchill, 10 Aug. 1950. Another example is that of Professor Reginald Victor Jones who was not only consulted on matters relating to radar, V-weapons, and scientific and technological threat during the war but also ended up writing the draft chapters. See CHUR 4/57B/17: Kelly to R.V. Jones, 1 Sept. 1950.

everything you can to fill them in'.<sup>62</sup> His memoirs were certainly not ghost written.<sup>63</sup> Even in 1963, two years before he died, the 'mechanical rights' to the preface for the abridged one-volume version of the memoirs were reasserted as belonging to Churchill.<sup>64</sup> He was classified and verified as the 'author' as he had been in all previous contracts.<sup>65</sup>

The syndicate did, at times, work with the least amount of interference from Churchill. Ismay and Pownall may have referred to Churchill as 'the Master' when corresponding with each other (the term suggests endearment rather than derogation), but they took their work for their 'Master' quite seriously.<sup>66</sup> They frequently corresponded with each other, made individual notes and comments on Churchill's drafts, and then met to compare notes and impressions, as well as to confer on which details would need checking by either Deakin or Kelly. They then reported back to Churchill. In one such report, Ismay wrote that at a preliminary meeting he and Pownall had discussed 'suggested amendments (many of them of a trivial character)'.<sup>67</sup> The two syndicate members had also discussed how the workload was to be divided between them, as well as just exactly what Churchill wanted from them. Indeed, Ismay actually questioned whether what they had done was in fact what Churchill wanted.<sup>68</sup>

It was however, the work of Edward Bridges and his successor Norman Brook that principally secured the title of 'historian' for Churchill.<sup>69</sup> As Cabinet

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<sup>62</sup> ISMAY 2/3/55: Churchill to Ismay, Pownall, Allen and Deakin, 19 May 1948.

<sup>63</sup> Robert Blake, *Winston Churchill* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998; repr., 2002), p. 95.

<sup>64</sup> CHUR 4/469/3: Moir to Montague-Brown, 25 Nov. 1963.

<sup>65</sup> CHUR 4/469/4–6: Unsigned copy of a literary contract detailing Churchill as the 'author' and assigning the copyright to the new preface to the abridged edition of the war memoirs to Churchill himself.

<sup>66</sup> ISMAY 2/3/108: Ismay to Pownall, 27 Oct. 1948; ISMAY 2/3/112: Ismay to Pownall, 10 Nov. 1948; and ISMAY 2/3/122/1: Pownall to Ismay, 1 Dec. 1948.

<sup>67</sup> ISMAY 2/3/26A: Ismay to Churchill, 4 Dec. 1946.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Edward Bridges became the Cabinet Secretary (civil side) in August 1938. However the phenomenal wartime workload led to the position of Deputy

Secretary, Bridges (and then Brook) followed their remit which was to smooth Churchill's, and his syndicate's, path when he sought permissions to quote from documents from both domestic and international spheres.<sup>70</sup> Such help was invaluable as it meant that the vast swathe of original documentation could be quoted from directly. Although heavily edited, such documents gave the memoirs an aura of veracity which added to the public's belief that what they were reading was the historical truth in Churchill's words. Brook took on a greater interest in the memoirs than Bridges had done.<sup>71</sup> In fact, he became one of Churchill's most trusted editors.<sup>72</sup> Arguably it was the intellectual and historical weight of the documentation which Bridges and Brook helped secure for Churchill's use which gave his memoirs the impression that they were in fact 'history'.<sup>73</sup> Churchill did nothing to dispel this belief.

His memoirs of the Second World War were exactly that—memoirs. But *The Second World War* nonetheless garnered a reputation of being, if not 'official' history, at least 'approved' history. Several factors contributed to this. Firstly, there was his pre-war reputation as a quasi-historian which had come about due to his *World Crisis*, *Lord Randolph Churchill* and *Marlborough*. Secondly, there was a vast swathe of documents to which Churchill and his syndicate were given

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Secretary to the Cabinet being created, to which Norman Brook was appointed in March 1942. In February 1945, Bridges became permanent Secretary to the Treasury and Head of the Civil Service whilst remaining as Cabinet Secretary and Brook continued as Deputy. Bridges was moved permanently to the Treasury by Attlee's Labour government and Brook finally became Cabinet Secretary (in his own right) in January 1947. Both men dealt with Churchill as Prime Minister and Churchill as memoirist.

<sup>70</sup> David Reynolds, 'Official History: how Churchill and the Cabinet wrote the Second World War', *Historical Research*, 78/201 (2005), pp. 400–22.

<sup>71</sup> Bridges started the process for Churchill and his syndicate, but it was Brook who 'vetted all six volumes of the war memoirs', Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 86.

<sup>72</sup> Brook insisted that Churchill did not acknowledge in print the extensive personal role he had taken in his dealings with Churchill's memoirs.

<sup>73</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 58–9.

access—documents to which no other researcher was privy<sup>74</sup>—as well as the way in which Churchill’s syndicate were made to feel at home in any library or archive.<sup>75</sup> The aura of authenticity was also provided by Attlee’s Labour government who seemingly gave their blessing to the endeavour, by the behind-the-scenes machinations of the Cabinet Secretaries, and by the fact that no official history of the war from the services had yet to be produced. All these factors combined made Churchill’s memoirs *much* more than a mere ‘contribution to history’.

Having been defeated in the general election of July 1945, partly due to the damage he did to his own reputation as a result of his ‘crazy’ so-called ‘Gestapo’ electioneering broadcast,<sup>76</sup> Churchill’s reputation as the ‘leader of humanity’ needed to be reinvigorated if he were ever to become prime minister of peacetime Britain.<sup>77</sup> One way in which he could do this was by manipulating his role in the history of the Second World War. It just so happened that the ‘broad avenues’ which he set out were the roads down which subsequent historians

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<sup>74</sup> Reynolds, ‘Churchill’s Writing of History’, pp. 225–45.

<sup>75</sup> ISMAY 2/3/255/1: in which Mr A. Johnston (Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet) apologised for the difficulty which Miss M.E. Green (Ismy’s Private Secretary) faced in gaining documents for Ismay and the syndicate. Johnston to Ismay, 11 Aug. 1950. See ISMAY 2/3/255/2: Johnston’s note authorising Miss Green and the syndicate to be ‘authorised at all times to consult (though not to take away) the Cabinet records of the 1939–45 war’, 1 Aug. 1950. Another source put at Churchill’s disposal was the Library of the House of Commons. Perhaps to encourage accuracy, but the offer made by one Librarian to Churchill ensured that the Library ‘and its staff are at your entire disposal’. CHUR 2/165/36: H.A. Saunders to Churchill, 1 July 1948.

<sup>76</sup> Herbert Morrison, ‘Churchill’s Crazy Broadcast’, *Daily Herald*, 5 June 1945. For a wider interpretation of the effect of Churchill’s broadcast see Richard Toye, ‘Winston Churchill’s “Crazy Broadcast”: Party, Nation, and the 1945 Gestapo Speech’, *Journal of British Studies*, 49/3 (2010), pp. 655–80.

<sup>77</sup> David Low, ‘Two Churchills’, *Evening Standard*, 31 July 1945. See illustration I, p. 39.



moved.<sup>78</sup> Although the syndicate, his friends and favourites, and the Cabinet Secretaries aided and abetted the production of Churchill's memoirs, it was Churchill who was the ultimate arbiter and judge of what was recorded. It may have been Deakin's research, Kelly's precise recall of documents and, at times, Pownall's actual handwriting but, overall, it was Churchill's narrative. If, as Foucauldian theory suggests, it is the narrative that wields the power of history,<sup>79</sup> and the memoirs are Churchill's narrative (despite the intervention of the syndicate and sometimes Brook), it should be Churchill who is held accountable. But those historians who do not deviate from Churchill's broad avenues, and who do not give a more rounded perspective of the war in the Far East as part and parcel of the world war are equally accountable.

The syndicate often tried to protect Churchill from himself. In one of the chapter proofs, of which there are dozens, one of Churchill's sentences read: 'so far the Japanese have only had two white battalions and a few gunners against them, the rest being Indian soldiers.'<sup>80</sup> Kelly rightly surmised that such a sentence would 'be read as a reflection on the Indian Army', and that it would be better to 'delete the words "the rest being Indian soldiers"'.<sup>81</sup> This is just one example of the syndicate trying to protect Churchill from himself, and it was done in the usual manner: thoughtfully suggestive yet persistent due to its connotation for Churchill's contemporary concerns. At other times though, the syndicate had to be more forceful and knock Churchill off 'his present perch'.<sup>82</sup> Although Pownall was 'confident' that Churchill would eventually 'come down a long way' and make the revision, he did not anticipate that Churchill would do so easily. Pownall even concluded that he had seen

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<sup>78</sup> Plumb, 'The Historian', in Taylor (et al), *Churchill: Four Faces*, p. 149.

<sup>79</sup> Colin Gordon (ed.), *Michel Foucault: Power/Knowledge: selected interviews and other writings, 1972–77* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980); and Anna Green and Kathleen Troup, *The houses of history: A critical reader in twentieth-century history and theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 301–06.

<sup>80</sup> CHUR 4/253A/128: Kelly to Churchill annotated note, 30 May 1950.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> ISMAY 2/3/271/2: Pownall to Mountbatten, 16 Feb. 1951.

plenty of previous instances in which I thought he was being unfair and I had to wade in. He grumbles and mumbles but if one sticks to it he gives way, perhaps at the very last moment and secretly, behind one's back!<sup>83</sup>

Kelly, Deakin, and Pownall were the researchers on whom Churchill leant most heavily for the major drafting of the events of the war in the Far East, especially as Kelly and Pownall had been stationed there, but they were also the ones who had to contend with an obstreperous Churchill.<sup>84</sup>

Historians are subject to an ever-increasing amount of scrutiny, especially those who are in the public eye. As John Tosh recently commented, historians are currently enjoying a higher public profile than they have done for many years—some have even become ‘household names’.<sup>85</sup> One result of historians becoming more visible, and perhaps influential, is that they have an ever-increasing responsibility—not only towards their own research but also towards the public, as wielding history in such a responsibility-laden way reinforces the old adage that history is *always* about power. For Tosh, the power of history lies in its ability to illuminate the present so that ‘intelligent decisions about difficult public decisions’ can be made.<sup>86</sup> If the ‘past exists for us only as it is written up by historians’ what happens if the most palatable narrative (and one written by one of the most important and prominent men of the event itself) becomes so engrained that it distorts subsequent, more reasoned and measured history?<sup>87</sup> This is the memoir-history spectrum, and one problem that this thesis faces is finding the

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Kelly was stationed in the Indian Mountain Artillery in India and Burma, 1941–45, and Pownall, appointed Commander in Chief of the Far East November 1941, became Mountbatten's Chief of Staff in 1943.

<sup>85</sup> John Tosh, ‘History for Citizens: Towards a Critical Public History’, Keynote address, Histfest, Lancaster University, 10 June 2011.

<sup>86</sup> John Tosh, *Why History Matters* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. viii.

<sup>87</sup> Alun Munslow, *Deconstructing History* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 33.

most appropriate place in which to situate Churchill's historical-narrative-memoir?

Memoirs come in all shapes and sizes. Some memoirs are produced, for example, as a cathartic act and are not normally destined for publication whilst others, such as memoirs written by political figures, are exactly the opposite. But Churchill's *Second World War* is more than just a political memoir; and, at times, such as when he recalled the loss of the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse*, it presumably acted as a cathartic experience. One historian noted that memoirs appear to be 'a kind of fiction' which differs from a novel told in the first person only 'by continuous implicit attestation of veracity or appeals to documented historical fact'.<sup>88</sup> By definition then, Churchill's memoirs were political as well as autobiographical because they were presented as *his* recollections of the war. Yet Churchill's memoirs also represented a wider, national and collective experience which resonated with the post-war book-buying public. This ability to encapsulate the collective memory of recent events, when coupled with the swathe of documentation included within the volumes, gave the impression that Churchill's *Second World War* was, in fact, history. Whilst the presumption that his memoirs would be a truthful rendition of history was not Churchill's, he did little to dispel the idea.

In Churchill, there existed an anomaly. He was a journalist, a politician, a statesman, an artist, an orator, and a man who appreciated not only his own but also national and international history. All of these factors, along with his ability to get what he wanted out of the Cabinet Secretaries as well as the syndicate, combined to make him the central figure in a very complicated Venn diagram. Added to the anomaly was the fact that he participated in the events about which he was writing. It was not just a matter that his memoirs were personal and participatory: it was the very fact that they were both personal and participatory which gave them the edge over other contemporary personal accounts. But it was the way in which Churchill tapped into the need for a collective representation of the wartime experience which helped seal the memoirs' reception and subsequent acceptance *as* history. Churchill's *Second World War* was much like the Column

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<sup>88</sup> Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: OUP, 1975; 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary edn, 2000), p. 310.

of Victory which was built to memorialise the First Duke of Marlborough, the only difference being that whilst the Column of Victory was started five years after Marlborough's death,<sup>89</sup> Churchill built his own literary column of victory as he hoped it would help him realise his remaining ambition—to become prime minister of peacetime Britain. In fact, so well-built was Churchill's literary victory column that it still proves hard to break free from a Churchillian-like narrative when examining almost any aspect of the Second World War.

When stationed in Bangalore at the end of the nineteenth century, Churchill had studied history and historians. He wrote that although Thomas Babington Macaulay had a 'captivating style and devastating self-confidence', he was nonetheless

the prince of literary rogues, who always preferred the tale to the truth, and smirched or glorified great men and garbled documents accordingly as they affected his drama.<sup>90</sup>

Exactly the same could be directed at Churchill and his portrayal of the war in the Far East. Churchill may have appreciated history, especially any history in which he could lay a claim to be directly involved, but this did not mean that he was an historian. He was however, arguably the most influential memoirist of the twentieth century. But did Churchill record an existing national consciousness, or did he help to manufacture a national historical memory?<sup>91</sup> The war in the Far East may have ended with Japan's surrender on 15 August 1945, but its constant historiographical relegation to the status of a side-show when compared to the European, Atlantic, or Middle Eastern theatres continued beyond the end of the century. Has the national memory of the Second World War been so effectively manipulated that the Far East still retains this status of a 'lesser war'?

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<sup>89</sup> David Green, *Blenheim* (Oxford: Alden Press, 1950; repr. 1970), p. 36.

<sup>90</sup> Churchill, *My Early Life*, p. 126.

<sup>91</sup> A question that Paul Bookbinder asked of post-war Germany and Japan, see Paul Bookbinder, "'Wie es eigentlich gewesen'" or Manufactured Historical Memory', *The Journal of The Historical Society*, 10/4 (2010), pp. 475–506.

One historian wrote that ‘as Britain’s decline as a Great Power proceeded apace, so did the need for Churchill to grow’.<sup>92</sup> There seems to have been no better vehicle for Churchill’s continued growth than a memoir. Throughout his *Second World War*, Churchill never quite disengaged his own needs (what he needed history to say) from the needs of a weary post-war public. As Low’s cartoon acerbically portrayed, the ‘leader of humanity’ – through his memoirs – became the leader of history. From an early twenty-first century perspective, the strength of Churchill’s memoir rests in how he effectively tapped into a collective need to make sense of the irrational events of the war itself. His memoirs seeped into the ‘historical consciousness’ of the nation.<sup>93</sup> And some elements of the mythical residue still resonate today: the ‘special relationship’ with America; the popular terminology of the ‘people’s war’; and the ‘Blitz spirit’, which even now is frequently invoked when community or national crises occur.<sup>94</sup> Subsequently Churchill’s memoirs became more than memoirs—they were elevated to the status of semi-official history. There is no denying that the memoirs were, and still are, an invaluable reference point. But the reference point is Churchill’s portrayal of events, of what he thought important, what he felt needed emphasising or omitting, and the extent to which his memoirs influenced official history. The vantage point from which Churchill wrote his recollections, and because he could not detach himself from the events, does not ‘preclude historical understanding’.<sup>95</sup> But, like all memoirs, Churchill’s need to be questioned.<sup>96</sup> Since

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<sup>92</sup> Charmley, *Churchill: End of Glory*, p. 647.

<sup>93</sup> Amos Funkenstein, ‘Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness’, *History and Memory*, 1/1 (1989), pp. 5–26.

<sup>94</sup> Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1991); *The People’s War: Britain, 1939–1945* (London: Cape, 1969); Juliet Gardiner, *The Blitz: The British under Attack* (London: HarperCollins, 2010); Malcolm Smith, *Britain and 1940: History, myth and popular memory* (London: Routledge, 2000); and Philip Ziegler, *London at War, 1939–1945* (London: Pimlico, 2002).

<sup>95</sup> Funkenstein, ‘Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness’, p. 22.

<sup>96</sup> Jeremy D. Popkin, ‘Holocaust Memories, Historians’ Memoirs: First-Person Narrative and the memory of the Holocaust’, *History and Memory*, 15/1 (2003), pp. 49–84.

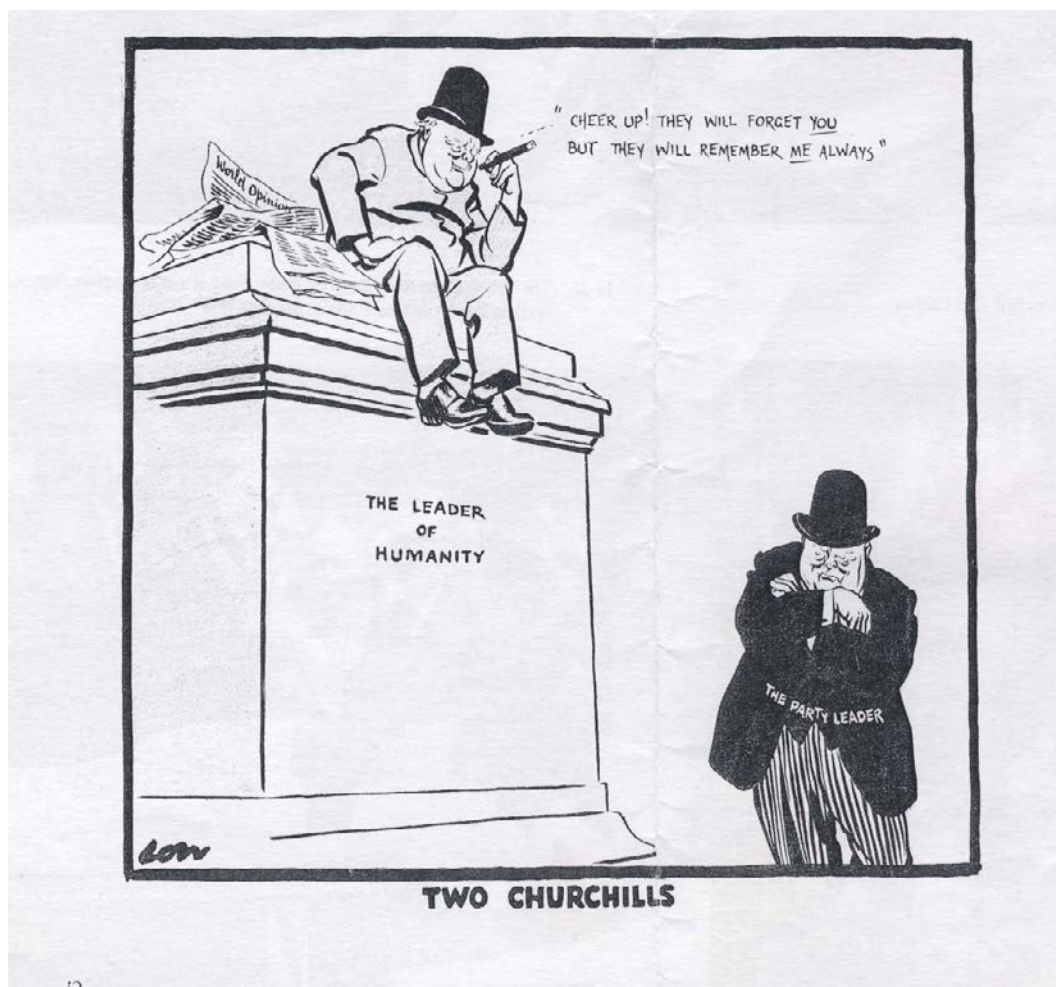
historians have the ability to change the way in which the past is viewed, any memoirist who so profoundly influenced history should be subject to the same scrutiny. The aim of this thesis is to challenge Churchill's memoirs and his analysis of the war in the Far East. At Fulton, Missouri, in March 1946, as he began his quest back to Downing Street, he declared that it was necessary in peacetime for the English-speaking peoples to have a 'constancy of mind' and a 'persistency of purpose'.<sup>97</sup> His memoirs were constant and persistent in one of their aims—to mythologize the wartime 'special relationship' between Britain and America.<sup>98</sup> The war in the Far East however, had proved to be a thorn in the side of Anglo-American relations; it would seem even more troublesome in the cold light of a post-war world. Questioning the history that Churchill forgot, ignored or glossed over in the Far East is central to this research. Its starting point is Churchill's imperialism.

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<sup>97</sup> Randolph S. Churchill (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: Post-War Speeches, The Sinews of Peace* (London: Cassell, 1948), 'The Sinews of Peace', Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri, 5 Mar. 1946, pp. 94.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

Illustration I.i



David Low, *Evening Standard*, 31 July 1945

## Chapter II: Churchill's British Empire.

Churchill's post-war recollection of the fortunes of the British Empire for the first half of 1942 was succinct enough—'all went ill'.<sup>1</sup> Whilst the latter half of the year had seen some Allied successes, such as El Alamein and Operation Torch, Churchill had thought it necessary to reanimate his prewar inveterate image as an 'unreconstructed imperialist'.<sup>2</sup> For this reason he declared in November 1942 that he had 'not become the King's First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire'.<sup>3</sup> Although a caricature of his imperialist beliefs from his first three decades in politics, Churchill resurrected his 1930s imperial rhetoric to achieve two objectives. Firstly, to spell out the British Empire's main war aim—'we mean to hold our own'.<sup>4</sup> Churchill felt the need to draw a line under the defeats and losses of the previous months, and he wanted to emphasize that the British Empire in the Far East was only temporarily unhinged. Secondly, Churchill was showing not only Japan but also America and Russia that the British Empire would not be extinguished by the war. With Churchill at the helm, the imperial British lion would not roll over and be squeezed between the American elephant and Russian bear.<sup>5</sup> At the end of 1942, Churchill felt it necessary to remind the empire's subjects, allies and enemies that the British Empire was still a force to be reckoned with. Yet, when it came to

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<sup>1</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Volume IV: The Hinge of Fate* (London: Cassell, 1951), p. ix.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Owen, 'The Cripps mission of 1942: A reinterpretation', *JICH*, 30/1 (2002), p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Rhodes James (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches: Volume VI, 1935–1942* (New York: Chelsea House, 1974), Churchill, Mansion House speech, London, 10 Nov. 1942, p. 6695.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> John Colville, *The Fringes of Power: Downing Street Diaries: Volume II, October 1941–April 1955* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985; Sceptre edn, 1987), 24 Feb. 1945, p. 204. Churchill's analogy sometimes changed to a British donkey squeezed between an American eagle and a Russian bear.



his memoirs, Churchill's most defiant and most-quoted imperial declaration was absent? Why? What had changed?

In essence, Churchill needed to protect his post-war reputation from the potential damage which his imperial rhetoric of the 1930s could inflict. He needed either to hide or to gloss over the constant imperial undercurrent which had suffused every ministerial position he had held during his first thirty years in politics. David Reynolds wrote that Churchill's 'famous phrase' did not appear in his memoirs as it 'sounded very hollow in 1950, after India, Pakistan and Burma had become independent and after Britain had withdrawn in chaos from Palestine'.<sup>6</sup> Indeed it did, but, as this thesis will illustrate, there was more than that to Churchill's omission, and his imperialism provides the answer. This thesis does not single out Churchill as the one reason for the end of the British Empire east of Suez. Many factors contributed to the scaling down of the empire into a Commonwealth, and then finally being blown away by the winds of change. But without doubt, Churchill was one of the 'small sparks' to light the 'long historical fuses' that led to the collapse of the British Empire.<sup>7</sup> This thesis examines not only how he surreptitiously tried to hide his role in the disintegration of the British Empire, east of Suez, from his memoirs, but also why.

Within any thesis space is at a premium, and to chart each facet of Churchill's imperialism, from inception until his death, would be untenable.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> David Reynolds, *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), p. 336.

<sup>7</sup> John Gallagher, 'The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire', in Anil Seal (ed.), *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire: The Ford Lectures and other essays by John Gallagher* (Cambridge: CUP, 1982; edn, 2004), p. 73.

<sup>8</sup> However, this is not to say that Churchill's imperialism cannot be briefly yet successfully charted. See Piers Brendon, 'Churchill and Empire', in Brian P. Farrell (ed.), *Churchill and the Lion City: Shaping Modern Singapore* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2011), pp. 10–35; and Ronald Hyam, 'Churchill and the British Empire', in Robert Blake and Wm.

This chapter intends to highlight those facets of Churchill's imperialism which he brought to bear on the British Empire by the time he became Prime Minister on 10 May 1940; a time when his exaggerated image as the quintessential imperial bulldog was used to create the defiance that accompanied his simple statement—'we are alone'.<sup>9</sup> In the 1930s such an image suited Churchill's desire to be kept in the public eye, and when he deemed it necessary he also exploited this image during the war. But when it came to his memoirs and how he portrayed the war in the Far East, he had to hide how dependent the British Empire had become on America in the Pacific, and how weak, in general, the empire prior to the outbreak of the Second World War had actually been. As the bluff and bluster of his wartime imperial rhetoric became inconvenient in the post-war world it was quite literally cut out of his memoirs. After briefly examining the state of the British Empire when Churchill was born, and the early imperial influences which surrounded him, the chapter will examine the main episodes in the development of Churchill's imperialism, particularly those episodes which were relevant to the British Empire east of Suez.

In 1993 Ronald Hyam wrote that, with the exception of India, 'on no aspect of Churchill studies has so little been written by so few as 'Churchill and

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Roger Louis (eds), *Churchill: A Major New Assessment of his Life in Peace and War* (Oxford: OUP, 1993), pp. 166–85.

<sup>9</sup> In fact Britain was not alone. As Fougasse's cartoon shows, it was Britain and her empire which faced the Axis powers after the fall of France. See illustration II, p. 81. Churchill announced that Britain would 'ride out the storm of war' and 'outlive the menace of tyranny, if necessary for years, if necessary alone'. Hansard, HC (series 5) vol. 361, col. 795 (4 June 1940). See David Edgerton, *Britain's War Machine: Weapons, Resources and Experts in the Second World War* (London: Allen Lane, 2011), pp. 11–85, in which he contests the notion of how Britain was 'alone'. Britain not only had an empire to call on but also American ties, and suppliers in the form of Denmark and Argentina. See also Ashley Jackson, *The British Empire and the Second World War* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), whose whole premise is that Britain had an empire and was therefore *not* alone.

the Empire''.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, in the fascinating field of imperial history,<sup>11</sup> the majority of works only briefly mention Churchill, his imperialism, and his part in the Empire's downfall.<sup>12</sup> One reason for the lack of research on Churchill's

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<sup>10</sup> Hyam, 'Churchill and the British Empire', in Blake and Louis (eds), *Churchill*, p. 167.

<sup>11</sup> The best of the most recently-published works on the British Empire, its rise and decline, are: John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World System, 1830–1970* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009); *After Tamerlane: The Rise and Fall of Global Empires, 1400–2000* (London: Penguin, 2008); Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London: Penguin, 2007); Richard Gott, *Britain's Empire: Resistance, Repression and Revolt* (London: Verso, 2011); Jonathan Hart, *Empires and Colonies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008); Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation 1918–1968* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006); *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815–1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Ashley Jackson, *The British Empire and the Second World War* (London: Hambledon, 2006); Kwasi Kwarteng, *Ghosts of Empire: Britain's Legacies in the Modern World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011); Philippa Levine, *The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2007); David Reynolds, *America, Empire of Liberty: A New History* (London: Allen Lane, 2009); Kathryn Tidrick, *Empire and the English Character: The Illusion of Authority* (London: Taurus Parke, 2009); Jeremy Paxman, *Empire: What Ruling the World Did to the British* (London: Viking, 2011); Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: OUP, 2004); *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism 1850–2004* (4<sup>th</sup> edn, Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2004); and Stanley Wolpert, *Shameful Flight: The Last Years of the British Empire in India* (Oxford: OUP, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> The exceptions to this rule are Raymond Callahan, *Churchill: Retreat from Empire* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1984); Peter Clarke, *The Last Thousand Days of the British Empire: The Demise of a Superpower, 1944–1947* (London: Penguin, 2008); Kirk Emmert, *Winston S. Churchill on Empire* (Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 1989); Ronald Hyam, *Elgin and Churchill at the Colonial Office, 1905–1908: The Watershed of the Empire-*

imperialism is its seemingly impenetrable and contradictory nature. As the historian Richard Toye recently wrote, the story of Churchill's imperialism and his relationship to, and concept of, the British Empire is one which is 'more complex than is often assumed'.<sup>13</sup> The intricacy of Churchill's imperialism begins with the term itself, which has proved difficult to define since its inception. One historian even remarked that 'imperialism' was 'a pseudo-concept which sets out to make everything clear and ends by making everything muddled';<sup>14</sup> and a consensus over the definition of the term 'imperialism' still proves elusive.<sup>15</sup> Yet Churchill had no such qualms over any attempt at

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*Commonwealth* (London: Macmillan, 1968); and Richard Toye, *Churchill's Empire: The World That Made Him and the World He Made* (London: Macmillan, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> Toye, *Churchill's Empire*, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> William Keith Hancock, *Wealth of Colonies* (Cambridge: CUP, 1950), p. 17.

<sup>15</sup> See the following for concise overviews at attempts at definition: P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, 'Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas II: New Imperialism, 1850–1945', *EconHR*, 40/1 (1987); and *British Imperialism, 1688–2000* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2002); D.K. Fieldhouse, 'Imperialism': An Historiographical Revision', *EconHR*, 14/2 (1961); John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', *EconHR*, 6/1 (1953); Rosalind O'Hanlon, 'Gender in the British Empire', in Judith Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume IV: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: OUP, 1999), pp. 379–97; John A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (New York: Cosimo, 2005 [1902]); Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990); Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (New York: International Publishers, 2004 [1939]); Philippa Levine (ed.), *Gender and Empire* (Oxford: OUP, 2004); Annie McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage Books, 1994); Helmut D. Schmidt and Richard Koebner, *Imperialism: The Story and Significance of a Political Word, 1840–1960* (Cambridge: CUP, 1964); and

definition. His imperialism was relatively instinctive and innate. One of his contemporaries remarked that when Churchill delivered the Mansion House speech in November 1942 it had not been done for effect. It had not been mere 'bravado', because if Churchill 'believed in any thing at all' it was in the British Empire.<sup>16</sup>

By the time Churchill was born, the British Empire was half way through its great 'imperial century' from 1815 to 1914.<sup>17</sup> Recognizing the independence of thirteen of the North American colonies in the 1780s did little to dampen British imperialism which, by then, was 'far too deep-rooted for its momentum to be seriously disrupted'.<sup>18</sup> Building upon the achievements of the Honourable East India Company (granted its charter by Queen Elizabeth I in 1600) the empire refocused and pushed eastwards.<sup>19</sup> During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the empire established a considerable presence in Africa and South-East Asia, thereby cementing itself as a dominating, if not *the* dominant, world power.<sup>20</sup> The British Empire was at its zenith in terms of its self-assuredness and there was arguably no need for bluff and bluster as the imperial belief in the right to rule appeared to be unquestionable and unflinching. After the Great War had seen the piecemeal division of the Turkish Empire, Britain acquired new imperial administrative responsibilities in the Middle East.

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Angela Woollacott, *Gender and Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

<sup>16</sup> Lord Moran, *Winston Churchill: The Struggle for Survival, 1940–1965* (London: Constable, 1966), p. 228.

<sup>17</sup> See Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*.

<sup>18</sup> P.J. Marshall (ed.), *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the British Empire* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), p. 16.

<sup>19</sup> The following provide comprehensive coverage of the Honourable East India Company: K.N. Chaudhuri, *The Trading World of Asia and the East India Company, 1660–1760* (Cambridge: CUP, 1978); Philip Lawson, *The East India Company: A History* (London: Longman, 1993); and P.J. Marshall, 'The English in Asia to 1700', in Nicholas Canny (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume I: The Origins of Empire* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), pp. 264–85.

<sup>20</sup> See Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*.

Although it would not reach its territorial zenith until the mid 1930s,<sup>21</sup> the British Empire was, if not in a state of hegemony, at least enjoying a period of relative calm compared to the previous century.<sup>22</sup>

By the time Churchill was one year old, Britain had bought a significant interest in the Suez Canal.<sup>23</sup> The canal provided an alternative and speedier route for British ships to India (the country that Queen Victoria described as 'so bright a jewel'), which was to be protected at all costs due to the amount invested in garrisons and trade.<sup>24</sup> In fact, it was the economic factor which meant that 'British policy was assertive not because policy-makers were in the pockets of the bond-holders, but because they recognised the need to defend Britain's

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<sup>21</sup> See Avner Offer, 'The British Empire, 1870–1914: A Waste of Money?', *EconHR*, 46/2 (1993), pp. 215–38, for a cogent argument about the irrationality behind the so-called balance sheet of empire analysis to determine whether this period was one of imperial investment and profit. Offer concludes that because the British Empire, in this period, 'was an adjunct of British wealth' it 'provided protection for that wealth' as well as 'the temptation to fight for it', p. 236. The kudos that Britain received by way of its imperial sway and influence during this period far outweighed the monetary rewards. See also Andrew Porter, 'The Balance Sheet of Empire, 1850–1914', *The Historical Journal*, 31/3 (1988), pp. 685–99, in which Porter warns historians against losing their 'sense of proportion simply because the figures look logical', p. 686.

<sup>22</sup> John Darwin, 'From Prudence to Disaster: The Geopolitical Fortunes of British Imperialism, 1840–1960', (University of Hull, Department of History, Research and Training Seminar: 4 Nov. 2009). A paper which distilled some of the key aspects of Darwin's most recent publication, *The Empire Project*.

<sup>23</sup> The purchase of the shares (arranged by Benjamin Disraeli\*) from the soon-to-be bankrupt Khedive of Egypt were worth £4 million (a significant) but not a majority interest in the canal. See Martin Lynn, 'British Policy, Trade, and Informal Empire in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', in Andrew Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume III: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: OUP, 1999: edn, 2001), pp. 102–21.

<sup>24</sup> As quoted in Saul David, *Victoria's Wars: The Rise of Empire* (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 354.

substantial economic interests'.<sup>25</sup> Protecting imperial investment, as well as the British occupation of Egypt (from 1882), following the army revolt led by Arabi Pasha in the previous year, may have highlighted two significant imperial thoughts for the young Churchill.<sup>26</sup> Firstly, it would have illustrated how important it had become to protect British imperial interests in this region. If not dealt with swiftly, a revolt could jeopardise British financial investments in the Suez Canal and India. Secondly, it would have highlighted the danger that such revolts posed to the prestige of the British Empire as a whole.

Churchill grew up during a period of assertive Victorian imperialism.<sup>27</sup> His burgeoning sense of empire included the need to protect imperial financial investment, the importance of maintaining imperial prestige, and swift 'justice' for colonial subjects who threatened these essential features of the British Empire's success. He became fixated on the notion that the British Raj in India was the cornerstone of what was essentially an eastwards-facing empire. British rule in India had to be protected—at all costs. In fact, Churchill was so convinced

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<sup>25</sup> P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion, 1668–1914* (London: Longman, 1993), p. 369.

<sup>26</sup> Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot, 'The British Occupation of Egypt from 1882', in Porter (ed.), *Oxford History of the British Empire: III*, pp. 651–64.

<sup>27</sup> The term 'Victorian' has acquired various connotations and inflections. Most obviously, it refers to the period when Queen Victoria (1819–1901) ruled Britain from 1837–1901. The term can be used to infer that someone has an outlook, a mentality or viewpoint, which is restricted, old-fashioned and out of date. When used in this way it is generally used as a term of derision, of abuse. However if someone describes themselves as Victorian, the term denotes a person of strong morals and strict beliefs; it takes on a more positive connotation. In Churchill's case he has often been described as essentially the subaltern of the Victorian era, most notably when his attitudes towards India are being examined, and especially when his attitudes towards race and empire are compared to any of his more enlightened contemporaries, such as the attitude of Leo Amery.\* In the 1930s when Churchill was in his (arguably self-imposed) wilderness, he willingly described himself as 'Victorian' as it bolstered the imperial image which he was fostering.

of the need to protect the Raj that he resigned in January 1931 from the Conservative Shadow Business Cabinet as he had 'reached the breaking-point' in his relations with Stanley Baldwin and the majority of the Conservatives over this very issue.<sup>28</sup>

Churchill's imperialism was also influenced by some of those great men of destiny whom he believed were responsible for the history and future of the empire. One such man was his father, Lord Randolph Churchill.\* Before helping to 'orchestrate the defeat of Gladstone's Liberal government' in 1885, Lord Randolph had been one of the few front-bench MPs to visit India.<sup>29</sup> When he returned to Britain, Lord Randolph informed Parliament that if the British Empire wished to secure the future of the Raj then it would have to exert its right to rule. If Britain 'showed the faintest indications of relaxing our grasp' then the Raj, and with it the rest of the Empire, would collapse.<sup>30</sup> Fortuitously for Lord Randolph, his words proved portentous when in 1885 Russian forces invaded Afghan territory at Panjdeh, an oasis south of the Oxus River. The 'Panjdeh incident' enabled Lord Randolph's warning to be taken seriously and diplomatic negotiations between Britain and Russia were undertaken.<sup>31</sup>

Although the young Churchill professed to never having had much contact with either of his parents,<sup>32</sup> he came to know his father's thoughts and career well after writing Lord Randolph's biography.<sup>33</sup> Even if the two Churchills did not discuss their respective concepts of imperialism, or their view of the British Raj and its central importance to the rest of the empire, the young Churchill was doubtlessly influenced, albeit after his father's death, by Lord

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<sup>28</sup> Churchill, *Gathering Storm*, p. 27.

<sup>29</sup> Roland Quinault, 'Lord Randolph Henry Spencer Churchill (1849–1895)', *ODNB* (OUP, Sept. 2004; online edn May 2009).

<sup>30</sup> Parl. Debs. (series 3) vol. 292, col. 1540 (4 May 1885).

<sup>31</sup> J. M. Brereton, 'The Panjdeh Crisis, 1885: Russians and British in Central Asia', *History Today*, 29/1 (1979), pp. 46–52.

<sup>32</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *My Early Life: A Roving Commission* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1930), pp. 1–48.

<sup>33</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill: Volumes I–II* (London: Macmillan, 1906).



Randolph. Churchill's father had been Secretary of State for India in 1885, and had stressed the view that India was the centrepiece of the British Empire.<sup>34</sup> If Britain could not keep hold of India, then the whole of the empire would become unstable.<sup>35</sup> If Britain were to lose India, it would also lose the corresponding prestige and status which three centuries of imperial expansion had engendered and Britain would no longer be viewed as a world power. India, and its place within the British Empire as a whole, was to become an obsession of Churchill's and the mainstay of his imperialist thinking.

Lord Randolph also illustrated that acts of international diplomacy certainly had their merits. Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy of India at the time of Panjdeh, had held talks with the Russian envoy and the ensuing settlement had averted the outbreak of war between Britain and Russia, and had reinforced Afghanistan's convenient role as a geographical and political bulwark against any immediate threat to British India from the north-west. Churchill's pre-occupation with Russian aggression (and its potential threat to India's security) after the First World War can also be partly attributed to the influence of his father. Churchill later acknowledged that, just as his father had used international diplomacy to secure India from Russian attack, he too had engaged in international diplomacy (in this instance with America) to protect British imperial interests in the Pacific. But whilst acknowledging that international diplomacy was a necessary measure, Churchill was wary of such acts, not least because he believed that the 'reason for having diplomatic relations is not to confer a compliment, but to secure a convenience'.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> See Robert F. Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill: A Political Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981); and Robert Rhodes James, *Lord Randolph Churchill* (London: Phoenix, 1994).

<sup>35</sup> A sentiment reiterated by Lord Curzon (Viceroy of India, 1898–1905) when he stated in 1901 that 'As long as we rule in India, we are the greatest power in the world. If we lose it we shall drop straight away to a third rate power'. Cited by Wm. Roger Louis, 'Introduction', in Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume IV, The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: OUP, 1999; edn, 2001), p.5.

<sup>36</sup> Hansard, HC (series 5) vol. 469, col. 2225 (17 Nov. 1949).

Churchill was similarly influenced by another Victorian imperialist who was equally assured of his suitability to rule over imperial territories as his father had been—Lord Salisbury.\* Michael Bentley's compelling biography of Salisbury highlights the similarity between Salisbury and the young Winston to such an extent that the reader has to constantly remind themselves that Salisbury and not Churchill is the subject.<sup>37</sup> The primary similarities between Salisbury and Churchill included their preoccupation with India's place at the core of the Empire, and the theory of racial superiority.<sup>38</sup> According to Bentley, Salisbury was a parsimonious imperialist. He believed that 'prudence, not sentiment' was the greatest way to protect the empire.<sup>39</sup> Salisbury also saw a clear connection between domestic stability and the security of the Empire: he believed that 'empire began at home and began, therefore, with the race that made it'.<sup>40</sup> Salisbury's imperialism had a considerable influence on Churchill and, in turn, Churchill gave Salisbury visible support even before Churchill became an MP. In one of his first election speeches, made whilst campaigning for election in Oldham in 1899,<sup>41</sup> Churchill declared that Salisbury's foreign policy did not need vindicating because consolidating the Empire, and strengthening 'the bonds of union between its widely scattered parts', was a task of which Salisbury was

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<sup>37</sup> Michael Bentley, *Lord Salisbury's World: Conservative Environments in Late Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), especially chapter 8, 'The Empire', pp. 220–50.

<sup>38</sup> The point must be made that Churchill was not alone in his concept of racial superiority nor, at the turn of the century, was his perception that India was the heart of the Empire a solitary view. These were widely held opinions at this time. It was, however, Churchill's obsession with India that separated him from other present-minded imperialists.

<sup>39</sup> Bentley, *Lord Salisbury's World*, p. 223.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

<sup>41</sup> Churchill failed to be elected as MP for Oldham in 1899. He succeeded a year later (in the so-called Khaki election) after his much publicised escape from a Boer prisoner of war camp and was finally elected as the Conservative Unionist MP for Oldham on 1 Oct., 1900.

clearly capable.<sup>42</sup> At the very end of his *Early Life*, Churchill wrote that the death of Lord Salisbury in 1903 led to a phase when 'much else was to pass away. His retirement and death marked the end of an epoch', as a 'new century of storm and change had already embraced the British Empire in its fierce grip'.<sup>43</sup> Although Churchill's imperialism, and his staunch belief in the concept of the British Empire, remained a prominent consideration, this does not mean that it was immutable. He was aware, at the turn of the century, of the change in the empire, and of its perception both at home and by other imperial powers.<sup>44</sup>

Two other men who had a great effect on Churchill and his imperialism, although in very different ways, were Jan Christiaan Smuts and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Throughout his life Churchill often relied upon the opinion of one of his most loyal friends and confidants, the future prime minister of the Union of South Africa—J.C. Smuts. Having passed the bar, Smuts nonetheless followed a career in politics. He was appointed Minister of the Interior in the South African Republic (in 1898) and soon encountered an Indian lawyer who had been sentenced to two years hard labour following a public burning of registration certificates that had been issued to Indian immigrants in South Africa. Much to Smuts's chagrin, he had little choice but to negotiate a settlement with this Indian lawyer—Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Smuts's disdain for Gandhi could have influenced Churchill, but Churchill was to develop an intense, almost obsessive, hatred of his own for Gandhi. Churchill's frequently-quoted description of Gandhi as 'a seditious Middle Temple lawyer now posing as a fakir of a type well-known in the East', perfectly illustrates not only Churchill's personal contempt for Gandhi but also his contempt for what the

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<sup>42</sup> Robert Rhodes James (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches, Volume I: 1897–1908* (New York: Chelsea House, 1974), Churchill election address, Oldham, 26 June 1899, p. 34.

<sup>43</sup> Churchill, *My Early Life*, p. 383.

<sup>44</sup> Churchill's account of the British Empire, and the Raj, was egocentric in that it focused on how he perceived the empire and its responsibilities. At times, and particularly in the interwar period, he did take note of how the British Empire was perceived by other European imperial powers but only so he could anticipate and therefore prevent any threat to his beloved empire.

Mahatma symbolized.<sup>45</sup> This damning indictment came at a time when Churchill had resigned himself to the back benches of the Commons, but not even the issue of self-government for India could excuse the venom he would later direct towards Gandhi during the pivotal year of 1942.

As Reynolds notes, Churchill made 'extensive use of his correspondence with Smuts' throughout his memoirs.<sup>46</sup> Smuts was a powerful and intelligent man who shared the same imperial mind-set as Churchill: both men believed in the notion of imperial duty, and to assert their rule over an indigenous population (especially when justified as protecting and guiding the vulnerable and weak).<sup>47</sup> Smuts was made a British Field Marshal in 1941, and credited himself with a great influence over the military decisions which the British War Cabinet made, as well as being on close personal terms with Churchill.<sup>48</sup> Undoubtedly the two men had a close friendship but this was not the only reason why Churchill relied heavily on his correspondence with Smuts in his memoirs.

Churchill started composing his memoirs in earnest in 1946, at a time when Smuts appeared to be 'in terrific form' with eyes which were 'bright blue

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<sup>45</sup> Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill: Volume V: Prophet of Truth, 1922–1939* (London: Heinemann, 1976; Minerva edn, 1990) p. 390.

<sup>46</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 266.

<sup>47</sup> Smuts was held in high regard by many. When Ernest Bevin heard Smuts had died, Bevin wrote: 'It seems strange to feel that Smuts has passed. I always seem to see him in the Cabinet room or in my office. It was always very encouraging to listen to his profound contributions to world problems. Experience counts a lot'. BEVN II 6/12/93: Ernest Bevin to Leife Egeland, 24 Oct. 1950.

<sup>48</sup> See Shula Marks, 'Smuts, Jan Christiaan (1870–1950)', *ODNB* (OUP, 2004; online edn, Jan. 2011) for a brief yet comprehensive summation of Smuts's considerable achievements. Also see Ronald Hyam and Ged Martin, 'The myth of the 'Magnanimous Gesture': the Liberal government, Smuts and conciliation, 1906' in their *Reappraisals in British Imperial History* (London: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 167–86, which convincingly argues that Smuts, like Churchill, was not adverse to creating his own stature by exaggerating his influence and achievements.

as ever with a dancing light in them'.<sup>49</sup> Smuts was seen as an international statesman who may have visibly aged and had become frail by 1948 (possibly due to bereavement), but he nonetheless continued 'to comment perceptively, and on occasion presciently, on world affairs'.<sup>50</sup> To some extent, Smuts had acted as a sounding-board for Churchill and, along with their respect for each other, including this type of correspondence did no harm to Churchill in the post-war years.<sup>51</sup> In fact the correspondence with Smuts, at least that which appeared in the memoirs, was used to show how Churchill was not afraid to solicit the most senior advice even if he knew he would be disagreed with. Churchill's careful selection of Smuts's replies gave the impression that at least one of Churchill's influential allies believed in the wartime strength and unity of the empire. All this bolstered Churchill's post-war image as a man who could parley with anyone on equal terms—an image Churchill had begun to emphasise at Fulton in 1946.

Whereas Smuts's notion of imperial protection for the weak and vulnerable was directed at the black South African population, Churchill was concerned with the Indian population. The idea that Britain's non-white imperial subjects, especially the Indians, would one day demand and control European-like institutions within their own country was anathema to Churchill. As Amery would later comment, 'India, or any form of self-government for coloured peoples' raised 'a wholly uncontrollable complex' in Churchill.<sup>52</sup> One example of the truthfulness behind Amery's observation occurred whilst Churchill was on

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<sup>49</sup> Nigel Nicolson (ed.), *The Harold Nicolson Diaries: 1907–1963* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004), 4 June 1946, p. 337.

<sup>50</sup> Marks, 'Smuts, Jan Christiaan (1870–1950)'.

<sup>51</sup> In his diary Harold Nicolson remarked that when Smuts was asked his opinion on post-war Britain, he said that there 'is no touch of age about England ... because you allow new ideas to enter your blood-stream'. Smuts commented that if the Conservative Party were to gain power again it would have to 'rid itself of its older men, perhaps even some of its older leaders, perhaps even of the greatest leader himself'. Nicolson (ed.), *Nicolson Diaries*, 4 June 1946, p. 337.

<sup>52</sup> Wm. Roger Louis, *In The Name Of God, Go! Leo Amery and the British Empire in the Age of Churchill* (New York: Norton, 1992), p. 20.

one of his many breaks from the ennui of his life in the British Army in India.<sup>53</sup> Churchill attended a luncheon party in London in 1899 where intellectual exercises were the entertainment and he was most intrigued with the question as to whether 'peoples have a right to *self* government or only to *good* government'.<sup>54</sup> Churchill favoured the latter. It was during his time in India that Churchill's concept of the British Raj became fixed and immutable as opposed to his pragmatic and comparatively fluid concept of the rest of the British Empire. His impressions of India merged with the various influences he had encountered in his youth in Britain; and his attitude towards India, the Indian population in general, and the Indian Army took the form it would do throughout his life.

By the time Churchill left India for good in 1899, his definition of imperialism, and his belief that India was the cornerstone of the British Empire, had become fixed. As long as India remained at the heart of the British Empire and under direct control, then the rest of the Empire could, and would, change, without loss of prestige, investment or power. He returned to Britain with the aim of entering Parliament, secure in the knowledge that there 'was pride in the broad crimson stretches on the map of the globe which marked the span of the British Empire, and confidence in the Royal Navy's command of the Seven Seas'.<sup>55</sup> The seminal importance of a superior Navy was a recurring theme of Churchill's earliest speeches, and continued to be an influential part of his imperialism. He later wrote that although Britain 'might not have been allowed to escape from her colonial war' against the Boers 'with an easy victory', it had been 'her dominion of the seas' that had 'caused second thoughts'.<sup>56</sup> From his first official political speech, addressed to a meeting of the Primrose League in 1897, Churchill highlighted the connection between a superior Navy and a strong British

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<sup>53</sup> Churchill's commission as a subaltern in the Queen's 4<sup>th</sup> Hussars lasted from 1896 to 1899. When his sojourns as a war correspondent and his trips back to Britain are totalled, he probably spent no more than 10–12 months in India itself.

<sup>54</sup> Churchill, *My Early Life*, p. 215.

<sup>55</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples: Volume IV, The Great Democracies* (London: Cassell, 1958), p. 292.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

Empire.<sup>57</sup> He proudly declared that 'our determination is to uphold the Empire that we have inherited from our fathers as Englishmen', that the British flag would 'fly high upon the sea', and that the 'voice' of the empire would 'be heard in the Councils of Europe', so that Britain would continue to 'carry out our mission of bearing peace, civilisation and good government to the uttermost ends of the earth'.<sup>58</sup>

Under the Liberal Prime Minister Henry Campbell-Bannerman,\* and before contesting (and then winning) the Liberal seat in North-West Manchester in 1905, Churchill was appointed as Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the Colonial Office. Working under the Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs, Lord Elgin,\* Churchill was responsible for handling colonial affairs in the Commons.<sup>59</sup>

Upon entering the Colonial Office, both men were immediately confronted with the problems of the South African settlement (in the form of establishing a constitution for the Transvaal), and of the repatriation from South Africa of Chinese labour. Churchill deliberated most over the question of the Transvaal constitution, and his proposal (masterminded by Elgin) was for self-government. Churchill's approach to the constitution of South Africa was described by Hyam as 'a classic statement of the Victorian and Edwardian ruling

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<sup>57</sup> The Primrose League was founded by Lord Randolph Churchill, John Gorst, Percy Mitford and Sir Henry Drummond Wolff (amongst others) in 1883. It promoted Conservative principles, as well as social activities, and one of its basic tenets was to encourage the development of its members whilst attempting to influence Conservative policy.

<sup>58</sup> Rhodes James (ed.), *Churchill: I*, 26 July 1897, p. 28. See also Randolph S. Churchill (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: Companion Volume II, Part 1, 1901–1907* (London: Heinemann, 1969), Churchill's untitled article for the *Daily Mail*, 17 June 1901, p. 71–2.

<sup>59</sup> Both Churchill and Elgin had met before (when Churchill was stationed in Bangalore and Elgin was Viceroy of India) and, as Churchill later recalled in 1930, Elgin had always 'extended a large hospitality to young officers who had suitable introductions'. Churchill, *My Early Life*, p. 168.

elite, the principle of timely concession to retain an ultimate control'.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, but it nonetheless illustrates the way in which Churchill always attempted to look at the bigger picture when he was playing some part in imperial affairs—especially when the security, future, or status of the British Empire was called into question. Churchill's notion of racial superiority informed his approach to the South African constitution question (that self-government was applicable to the Transvaal but certainly not India). He would have seen self-government for the Transvaal as a natural progression – the Boers were, after all, of white Dutch descent – and he declared that the act of conferring self-government was a 'gift' from Britain.<sup>61</sup> As long as the overall security of Imperial interests was not threatened, it was the 'magnanimous' option to take.<sup>62</sup> Although his speech to the Commons on 31 July 1906 was poorly received (most Conservative members of the House had yet to forgive him for crossing the floor), the Transvaal constitution was passed, and self-government was granted five months later in December 1906.

Hyam suggests that Churchill's 'interest in the empire never fully absorbed him entirely' at the Colonial Office, and it 'may indeed have been very nearly exhausted by it'.<sup>63</sup> This is possibly too harsh a judgement on Churchill's mercurial mind. His deep-seated beliefs in the 'holy trinity' of empire would not have vanished; they simply receded whilst other, more pressing, ministerial responsibilities took precedence. Having dealt with the most urgent imperial matter (the Transvaal constitution), Churchill once again stepped back to survey the bigger imperial picture. His ability to see the overall picture did not decline. Nor did it exhaust him. But it was, at times, superseded by whatever matter his current ministerial post required. Rather than Churchill being exhausted by his post as Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, it is perhaps more appropriate to suggest that the experience reinforced his belief in the 'holy trinity' of the British

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<sup>60</sup> Hyam, *Elgin and Churchill*, p. 116.

<sup>61</sup> Rhodes James (ed.), *Churchill: I*, 31 July 1906, p. 662; and Parl. Debs. (series 4) vol. 162, col. 753 (31 July 1906).

<sup>62</sup> Hyam and Martin, 'The myth of the 'Magnanimous Gesture': the Liberal government, Smuts and conciliation, 1906'.

<sup>63</sup> Hyam, 'Churchill and Empire', in Blake and Louis (eds), *Churchill*, p.167.



Empire. Without domestic stability, without free trade, and without naval supremacy, the associated imperial prestige of the British Empire could be threatened.

In April 1908 after Campbell-Bannerman's resignation, Churchill's position at the Colonial Office came to an end when he was transferred into the Cabinet as President of the Board of Trade. Here, his brand of social liberalism came to the fore as David Lloyd George,\* the Chancellor of the Exchequer, encouraged him to improve social policy through trade reforms.<sup>64</sup> In light of the influence that Lord Salisbury had on Churchill, his time at the Board of Trade is relevant to the discussion of his imperialism because it illustrates how Churchill realised that, since 'empire began at home',<sup>65</sup> domestic policies should be a splendid example of the justice-for-the-vulnerable genre of imperial philosophy in which he had engaged during his first position in the Colonial Office—except that it was now aimed at Britain's domestic workforce.<sup>66</sup> Paul Addison concluded that although 'Churchill's impact ought not to be exaggerated', he was nonetheless 'a dynamic force who arrived at the Board of Trade with a strong commitment to reform'.<sup>67</sup> Addison acknowledges that the poor physical condition of the British troops at the start of the Boer War had been a result of poverty, of poor domestic, social and economic conditions. Yet Addison fails to link the 'almost commonplace' view that domestic 'poverty was a threat to the Empire', with why Churchill became so enamoured with social reform.<sup>68</sup> For Churchill, domestic social reform was paramount as it invariably led to an increase in domestic stability which, he believed, was an essential element to the bigger imperial picture. Churchill reasoned that one way to bolster the image and

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<sup>64</sup> See Paul Addison, 'Churchill and Social Reform', in Blake and Louis (eds), *Churchill*, pp. 57-78; and Richard Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill: Rivals for Greatness* (London: Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>65</sup> Bentley, *Lord Salisbury's World*, p. 222.

<sup>66</sup> Churchill had vociferously campaigned against Chinese indentured labour when he was Under-Secretary for the Colonies.

<sup>67</sup> Addison, 'Churchill and Social Reform', in Blake and Louis (eds), *Churchill*, p. 61.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

standing of the empire was if its British troops were of a good physical condition—a justification Churchill had previously used in an article he had written for the *Daily Mail*.<sup>69</sup>

But social reform (which included the introduction of statutory minimum wages, government-funded labour exchanges and compulsory unemployment insurance) proved expensive and led to a contradiction for Churchill and his imperial philosophy: in order to provide Britain with these social reforms Churchill, along with his radical mentor Lloyd George, demanded reductions in the naval estimates for 1909. How did Churchill reconcile his recently reinvigorated desire for domestic social reform at the expense of his belief in a strong navy? This conundrum did not go unnoticed. Even Sir John Fisher, the First Sea Lord, and a stalwart supporter of Churchill's veneration for the Admiralty (which in 1909 was in crisis over the apparent rate of German and Japanese naval expansionism), confessed to Churchill that he 'never expected' him 'to turn against the Navy' after everything Churchill 'had said in 'public and private'.<sup>70</sup> But once again, Churchill looked at the bigger imperial picture, and concentrated on the job at hand.<sup>71</sup> After all, if he could succeed at the Board of Trade his next ministerial post might be more suited to his imperial philosophy and involve more direct involvement in imperial affairs.

After Asquith had won the general election of January 1910, Churchill became Home Secretary but his reputation as rash and eager for action marred

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<sup>69</sup> Winston S. Churchill, 'A Danger to the Empire: Condition of Our Army', *Daily Mail*, 16–18 Dec. 1904.

<sup>70</sup> Randolph S. Churchill (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: Companion Volume II, Part 2, 1901–1907* (London: Heinemann, 1969), Fisher to Churchill, 28 Feb. 1909, p. 956.

<sup>71</sup> See: Arthur J. Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: the Royal Navy in the Fisher era, 1904–1919*, (London: OUP, 1961–70) 5 volumes; Barry M. Gough, 'The Royal Navy and the British Empire', in Robin N. Winks (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume V, Historiography* (Oxford: OUP, 1999; edn, 2001), pp. 327–41; and Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Fontana Press, 1991).

any subsequent achievements.<sup>72</sup> His much-maligned role in ‘all the stale old things—Sidney St., Tonypandy and the Dartmoor Shepherd’ did little to enhance his already precarious reputation within the Commons.<sup>73</sup> To have unrest in the mother country was symptomatic of an unstable empire. If the parent could not control its own child, then it would be less likely to control its faraway foster children. As President of the Board of Trade, Churchill’s concerted efforts had been to improve the prestige of the British at home, because domestic instability would reflect poorly in the imperial mirror. He was no less concerned with imperial prestige during his tenure as Home Secretary, as he was with his belief in the duty Britain had towards the weak and vulnerable. Addison correctly surmises that Churchill’s time as Home Secretary ‘exemplified the kind of liberalism that was most in harmony with his personality: the extension of mercy to the weak and powerless’.<sup>74</sup> Addison, however, fails to see the link between this belief in justice for the vulnerable with Churchill’s overall imperialism. Addison also noted that Churchill’s sense of ‘*paternalism* was never to disappear from his politics’ although his radicalism did.<sup>75</sup> Churchill’s sense of paternalism

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<sup>72</sup> Once again, this is an area of Churchill’s career that is comparatively under-researched and, in general, what research does exist paints him as a sabre-rattling, punitive Home Secretary: Norman Rose, *Churchill: An Unruly Life* (London: Touchstone Books, 1998), and Robert Rhodes James, *Churchill: A Study in Failure, 1900–1939* (London: Penguin, 1973). For a view which supports the argument that Churchill believed in justice for all which began at home and stretched across the entire British Empire see: Victor Bailey, ‘Churchill as Home Secretary: Reforming the Prison Service’, *History Today*, 35:3 (1985), pp. 10–13; and Richard Devine, ‘Top Cop in a Top Hat: Churchill as Home Secretary, 1910–1911’, in *Finest Hour*, 143 (2009), pp. 20–24.

<sup>73</sup> Mary Soames (ed.), *Speaking for Themselves: The Personal Letters of Winston and Clementine Churchill* (London: Black Swan, 1999), Churchill to Clementine, 26 June 1911, p. 49.

<sup>74</sup> Addison, ‘Churchill and Social Reform’, in Blake and Louis (eds), *Churchill*, p. 63.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

would not fade as it was inextricably linked, in Churchill's mind, to his notion of imperial duty.

Churchill's radicalism began to wane by October 1911 as his promotion to First Lord of the Admiralty meant that as he was in a position to directly influence imperial policy and strategy, he no longer needed to wear a radical overcoat. Perhaps this is too cynical a view of Churchill's political career but he was a man who would happily 'rat', then 're-rat', in order to maintain his own position, if not at the helm then at least, at the periphery of imperial policy.<sup>76</sup> After all, in what can be described as a Machiavellian manoeuvre, Churchill highlighted how *au fait* he was with the possible consequences of the Agadir Crisis;<sup>77</sup> and this blatant self-promotion led Asquith not only to invite Churchill to attend the secret Committee of Imperial Defence meeting of 23 August 1911 but also, given his recent and accurate predictions over German naval and military strategy, to send Churchill to the Admiralty. Asquith wrote that he was 'satisfied that Churchill' was the 'right man' to go to the Admiralty.<sup>78</sup> Indeed he was, as Churchill could finally concentrate on the mainstay of his imperial 'holy trinity'—a superior Navy.

Before Churchill's appointment to the Admiralty, Edwardian concerns as to the longevity of the Empire had begun to be murmured within the corridors of

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<sup>76</sup> Having crossed the floor of the Commons from the Conservative to the Liberal benches on 31 May 1904, and having then crossed back and officially re-joined the Conservatives in 1925, Churchill allegedly said that 'anyone can 'rat', but it takes a certain amount of ingenuity to 're-rat''. But as with quite a few of Churchill's quotes, verifying the quote is illusive. Even Richard M. Langworth (President of the Churchill Centre in Washington, D.C. from 1988–99, and editor of the Churchill Society's journal *Finest Hour*), who was once described as having an encyclopaedic knowledge of Churchill's published words, leaves this quote unattributed. See Richard M. Langworth (ed.), *Churchill's Wit: The Definitive Collection* (London: Ebury, 2009), p. 75.

<sup>77</sup> See Michael Dockrill, 'British policy during the Agadir crisis of 1911', in Francis Hinsley (ed.), *British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey* (Cambridge: CUP, 1977).

<sup>78</sup> Churchill (ed.), *Churchill: II*, 2, Asquith to Lord Crewe, 7 Oct. 1911, p. 1295.

Whitehall. When Churchill had been Under-Secretary for the Colonies, he had been aware of these barely-audible fears but he hoped that such a disparaging view of the empire would melt away as his actions, or so he thought, would have helped restore the empire's equilibrium. In Churchill's mind, those who subscribed to the 'weary Titan'<sup>79</sup> view of the British Empire were mistaken.<sup>80</sup> Instead, Churchill saw the British Empire as 'a strong young giant, flushed with the pride of victory'.<sup>81</sup> But the nagging doubt remained: in the event of a war in Europe, would the Navy be able to protect Britain's own coast as well as all of its imperial shores? In reaction to the disastrous Dardanelles campaign, Churchill was removed from the Admiralty in May 1915 and made Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.<sup>82</sup> The fact that Churchill had been removed from the

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<sup>79</sup> The phrase 'weary Titan' was coined by Matthew Arnold (1822–88), the poet, cultural commentator and school inspector, in his poem *Heine's Grave* published in 1867. Arnold's description of the British Empire, as weary under the immense Atlantean load of the too vast orb of her fate, was later reiterated, in 1902, by Joseph Chamberlain (1836–1914), the industrialist and politician, when he was Secretary of State for the Colonies, in his opening speech to the Colonial Conference. See 'The Colonial Conference, Mr Chamberlain's Opening Speech', *The Times*, 4 Nov. 1902.

<sup>80</sup> See Aaron L. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895–1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), for a detailed analysis of imperial weariness as opposed to Darwin, *The Empire Project*, in which he stresses that Edwardian fears were rather more about imperial overstretch, as opposed to fears of an imminent imperial collapse.

<sup>81</sup> Rhodes James (ed.), *Churchill: I*, Churchill election address, Oldham, 27 June 1899, p. 41.

<sup>82</sup> It should be noted that the War Council recommended that the Dardanelles be a Naval enterprise, and that they should 'bombard and take the Gallipoli Peninsula, with Constantinople as its objective' which Churchill (as First Sea Lord) accepted. See Marder *From Dardanelles to Oran*, p. 2. See Amanda Capern, 'Winston Churchill, Mark Sykes and the Dardanelles Campaign of 1915', *Historical Research*, 71 (1998); Tim Coates (ed.), *Lord Kitchener and Winston Churchill: The Dardanelles Commission, Part I, 1914–1915* (London:

Admiralty and given a minimal post led him to fall on his political sword and he resigned from the government in October 1915. These were severe blows to his ability to influence imperial policy and strategy. Churchill would later reflect that his initial years as First Sea Lord were 'the four most memorable years' of his life,<sup>83</sup> but the combination of his part in the Dardanelles campaign, the long-lasting Conservative memory of him having crossed the floor, and his resignation, meant he was effectively out of office.<sup>84</sup>

Following a one-hundred-day stint at the front in the winter of 1916, Churchill resigned his commission. He was excluded from further office until Lloyd George appointed him Minister of Munitions on 17 July 1917. The end of the war ensured the end of Churchill's latest Ministerial post, but the general election of December 1918 saw Churchill continue to hold his Dundee seat. He was later awarded the newly-created post of Secretary for Air and War (a post he held from 10 January 1919 till 13 February 1921). Although not generally considered to be a post from which he would be able to directly influence imperial policy, this did not stop Churchill from doing so. An example of his attempts to influence Imperial policy is set down in a note he sent to the Committee of Imperial Defence, dated 13 February 1921, in which he wanted to disassociate himself with Admiral Richmond's evidence regarding the question of Capital ships in the Navy. Churchill concluded that

I do not at all admit that we are unable to maintain British sea power. On the contrary, I am confident that the nation

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HMSO, 1917; Stationery Office edn, 2000); and *Defeat at Gallipoli: The Dardanelles Commission, Part II, 1915–1916* (London: HMSO, 1918; Stationery Office edn, 2000).

<sup>83</sup> Randolph S. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill, Volume II: Young Statesman, 1901–1914* (London: Heinemann, 1967), p. 50.

<sup>84</sup> The Dardanelles campaign was the lowest point, as yet, in Churchill's political career. Although the Dardanelles Enquiry cleared him of wrong doing political mud sticks. The consequence for Churchill's brand of imperialism was the understandable sour taste the disaster at Gallipoli had on the Australian and New Zealand Dominions.

has both the means and the will to do so and that it is our duty to make every sacrifice for that purpose.<sup>85</sup>

After a three-year hiatus, Churchill, as Minister for War and Air, was able to return to promoting and protecting the British Empire at all costs.

The collapse of Tsarist Russia sent shivers down Churchill's imperial spine. Whilst he feared that Bolshevism would spread into the rest of Europe, especially Germany, his immediate concern was the geographical proximity of Russia to India where the growing incidences of Indian nationalist unrest would take little encouragement to ignite. The hardships which the Indian troops had endured in the name of loyalty to the King and Empire contributed to the increase of localised incidences of Indian nationalism.<sup>86</sup> In order to gain India's wholehearted cooperation in the First World War, Britain had dangled the tantalising carrot of partial self-government in front of India (the Montagu Declaration of 1917), and said that it would be considered after the Great War.<sup>87</sup> One result of the Rowlatt Commission of 1918 was the Rowlatt Acts, passed in March 1919. These acts were a direct result of the Raj's fear of the growing number of violent expressions of political unrest by Indian nationalists and, arguably, General Dyer's barbaric actions in the Jallianwallah Bagh at Amritsar (on 13 April 1919) were symptomatic of the Raj's fear of the growing incidences

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<sup>85</sup> CHAR 25/2/8: Churchill to the Committee of Imperial Defence, 13 Feb. 1921.

<sup>86</sup> For details on the conditions experienced by the Indian troops see: Gordon Corrigan, *Sepoys in the Trenches: The Indian Corps on the Western Front, 1914–1915* (Stroud: Spellmount, 2006); and David E. Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War; Soldiers' Letters, 1914–18* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), pp. 23–131.

<sup>87</sup> See Judith M. Brown, *Modern India : The Origins of an Asian Democracy* (Oxford, OUP, 1985), pp. 188–202; David Low (ed.), *Congress and the Raj: Facets of the Indian Struggle, 1917–1947* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, New Delhi; OUP, 2004), pp. 1–46; Budheswar Pati, *India and the First World War 1914–1918* (New Delhi: Atlantic, 1996), pp. 136–241; and Sir Algernon Rumbold, *Watershed in India, 1914–1922* (London: Athlone Press, 1979), pp. 1–126.

of Indian nationalism.<sup>88</sup> Although Churchill would later be called upon to justify the Government's reluctance to hardly punish Dyer, it was a task which Churchill turned to his advantage as he used it to illustrate the empire's duty towards the weak and vulnerable. However Churchill was considerably more fearful of Bolshevism spreading into India, and causing further anti-Raj unrest. Preoccupied with the security of the empire as a whole he focused on the supposed Russian threat.

Churchill described the Bolshevik leaders as 'a selfish blundering crew of tyrants and parasites who descended upon an unhappy land and enslaved or slaughtered its people, soiled its honour, [and] ruined its prosperity'.<sup>89</sup> Not wishing India to be infected by such 'parasites', as well as wishing to protect British investments in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (of which the British government had purchased 51 per cent of the stock on Churchill's initiative), Churchill argued that instead of withdrawing British troops, who had remained in Russia since the cessation of hostilities, they should merely be transferred to Russia to 'keep alive the Russian forces which were attempting to make headway against the Bolsheviks'.<sup>90</sup> If Bolshevism were to spread, Churchill feared that the resulting Bolshevik Empire would undoubtedly pose a threat to British imperial interests in the Middle and Far East. But much like its European neighbours, both the vanquished and the victorious, Britain had been virtually bankrupted by the Great War and, in 1919, Churchill was faced with a dilemma.<sup>91</sup> Demobilisation

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<sup>88</sup> See Tim Coates (ed.), *The Amritsar Massacre: General Dyer in the Punjab, 1919* (London: HMSO, 1920; Stationery Office edn, 2000); Nigel Collett, *The Butcher of Amritsar: General Reginald Dyer* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007); V.N. Datta and S. Settar (eds), *Jallianwala Bagh Massacre* (New Delhi: Pragati, 2000); Nick Lloyd, *The Amritsar Massacre: The Untold Story of one Fateful Day* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011); and Derek Sayer, 'British reaction to the Amritsar Massacre, 1919-1920', *Past and Present*, 131 (1991).

<sup>89</sup> CHAR 8/215/17: Churchill, 'Mr H. G. Wells and the British Empire', Nov. 1927.

<sup>90</sup> CAB 23/9: Churchill, 12 Feb. 1919.

<sup>91</sup> See Kevin Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire, 1918-1922* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. 96-154.



had to be carried out, but this would mean limited troops (as well as limited funding for existing troops) available for policing the empire, especially east of Suez. His boundless energy, and his constant efforts to resolve the perceived Bolshevik menace, to his own satisfaction, also placed a strain on those who had to work with him. (Churchill was not the only Cabinet member, or MP, to acknowledge the Bolshevik threat to the British Empire, but his was the loudest and most constant of the anti-Bolshevik voices).<sup>92</sup> After two years of constant pushing about Russia, he received the Cabinet's definitive answer which came in the form of Lloyd George swiftly 'looking to move Churchill to a post where he could cause less trouble, not more'—the Colonial Office.<sup>93</sup>

Always looking at the bigger Imperial picture, Churchill accepted the post of Colonial Secretary as he felt that it was his 'duty to comply'.<sup>94</sup> However, in his acceptance letter, he asked for the 'power & the means of coping with the very difficult situation in the Middle East'.<sup>95</sup> Not having even started his post, Churchill was already asking that his remit be more than any previous Colonial Secretary. This was the first, but definitely not the last, time that Churchill asked for the tools to finish the job. After nearly two months, and on the day before he officially started, he wrote that, 'for a week I shall hold the seals of three separate Secretaryships of State—I expect a record'.<sup>96</sup> As he was already the Minister for War and Air, Churchill was *au fait* with Mesopotamian, Persian and Egyptian matters when he transferred to the Colonial Office, and the enthusiasm he had for his new post matched his eagerness to protect the Empire. It has been suggested that it was this second stint at the Colonial Office that 'exhausted' Churchill's

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<sup>92</sup> Martin Gilbert (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: Companion Volume IV, Part 2, July 1919–March 1921* (London: Heinemann, 1977), Lord Derby to Churchill, 17 Dec. 1920, 'I want to tell you how absolutely I agree with the line you are taking about the Bolsheviks', p. 1270.

<sup>93</sup> Rose, *Churchill*, p. 151.

<sup>94</sup> Gilbert (ed.), *Churchill: CV IV, 2*, Churchill to Lloyd George, 4 Jan. 1921, p. 1289.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> Soames (ed.), *Speaking for Themselves*, Churchill to Clementine, 6 Feb. 1921, p. 225.

interest in the Empire.<sup>97</sup> It has also been suggested that his second Colonial Office post was a 'stop-gap' as he eagerly eyed the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer.<sup>98</sup> This research argues that this second period at the Colonial Office was not an exhausting stop-gap; this post enabled Churchill to not only deal directly with problems that affected the security of the Empire, but also to survey the empire, especially east of Suez, for signs of weakness. This turn of events compelled him to review his concept of the extent, but never the power or status, of the British Empire and he set about his duties with gusto.<sup>99</sup>

Even though Churchill was Secretary of State for the Colonies for a relatively brief period of time, he still managed to accomplish as much as he could to fortify the status and prestige of the British Empire on the world stage.<sup>100</sup> His vision of a British Empire, that had India (its jewel at the centre) protected, stable and bordered by British interests, was once again under threat. The development of anti-Bolshevik regimes in countries that bordered Russia was encouraged by Churchill but, as Minister for War and Air, he had less direct influence on imperial policy and strategy than he would have liked. But this was to change because as Secretary of the Colonies Churchill could now not only openly take part in Imperial defence, policy and strategy, but he could also direct it.

The British military authorities, having conquered most of Mesopotamia during the First World War, continued to oversee the administration of the country.<sup>101</sup> The British administration was replaced, in 1920, by an Iraqi Council

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<sup>97</sup> Hyam, 'Churchill and Empire' in Blake and Louis (eds), *Churchill*, p. 167.

<sup>98</sup> Rose, *Churchill*, p. 153.

<sup>99</sup> One example of Churchill's immersion in imperial matters was his role in the abolition of the mui tsai system, the 'practice of taking small girls to work as domestic servants'. A centuries-old and endemic practice in China. See Norman Miners, *Hong Kong under Imperial Rule, 1912–1941* (Hong Kong: OUP, 1987), p. 153.

<sup>100</sup> Churchill was Secretary of State for the Colonies from 13 February 1921 to 24 October 1922.

<sup>101</sup> See Kristian Ulrichsen, 'The British Occupation of Mesopotamia, 1914–1922', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 30:2 (2007); Edwin Latter, 'The Indian army

of State but it was still under the supervision of the British military authorities. In 1921, Iraq became a Kingdom but the British remained as the League of Nations had conferred the mandate to the British in 1920.<sup>102</sup> Speaking on his proposed Middle East settlement to the House of Commons, Churchill declared that the British government, as a result of the acceptance of the Peace Treaties had entered into obligations which were 'solemnly accepted before the whole world'.<sup>103</sup> Holding the mandates for Palestine and Mesopotamia meant that Britain, having accepted this 'serious responsibility,' was duty bound 'to behave in a sober and honourable manner', and to 'discharge obligations' which Britain had entered into with her 'eyes open'.<sup>104</sup> Once again, for Churchill, duty was part and parcel of imperial responsibility. Britain may have been one of the victors at the end of the 'agony of the Great War,' but this did not negate the obligations she had made along the march to victory.<sup>105</sup> Throughout this speech, Churchill constantly referred to both the duty that the British government had towards the mandates, and the cost. He emphasised that reductions in expense, mainly through a large-scale demobilisation programme had been made and that, although he hoped not to demand 'further sacrifices from the British taxpayer', the current government situation (and their financial resources) would enable

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in Mesopotamia, 1914-1918', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 72 (1994); Mason, *A Matter of Honour*; and Lord Hardinge, *My Indian Years, 1910-1916: The Reminiscences of Lord Hardinge of Penhurst* (London: Murray, 1948).

<sup>102</sup> See Christopher Catherwood, *Churchill's Folly: How Winston Churchill created modern Iraq* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2004); Aaron S. Klieman, *Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World: The Cairo Conference of 1921* (Baltimore/ London: John Hopkins Press, 1970); Ritchie Owendale, 'Churchill and the Middle East 1945-55', in R.A.C. Parker (ed.), *Winston Churchill: Studies in Statesmanship* (London: Brassey's, 1995); and Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country* (London: Tauris, 2007).

<sup>103</sup> Hansard, HC (series 5) vol. 143, col. 266 (14 June 1921).

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 267 (14 June 1921).

then to 'discharge' their 'obligations'.<sup>106</sup> However, Churchill also temptingly acknowledged that the obligations of the British government to the mandates in Palestine and Mesopotamia were not 'unlimited'.<sup>107</sup> In other words, if the Mandates rewarded the British government in that they either bolstered the prestige and power of the British Empire upon the world political stage, then they would be maintained.

Churchill declared that his 'very simple' aim for the Cairo Conference of March 1921 had been to bring together the British Empire's 'civil, military, and air' authorities who, alongside Arab delegates, would establish 'an independent native Arab state ... under an Arab King' in Mesopotamia, whilst incurring as little expense as possible.<sup>108</sup> Churchill arrived two days before the start of the conference so that he could get the assurance that airpower 'could transform the military situation in Mesopotamia' and save 'serious millions'.<sup>109</sup> Churchill's parsimonious attitude came from his time as Minister of War and Air (January 1919 to February 1921), when demobilisation had been his primary objective. He continued his belt tightening as Secretary of State for the Colonies—a position he accepted a month before the Cairo Conference was due to start.<sup>110</sup> Minimising the cost of policing this new addition to Britain's imperial duties (although Mesopotamia was a mandate and not a direct imperial territory) was Churchill's preoccupation.<sup>111</sup> In fact, instead of the aggrandisement of British imperial

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Winston S. Churchill, 'Mesopotamia and the New Government', *The Empire Review*, 38/270 (1923), p. 696.

<sup>109</sup> Christopher Catherwood, *Churchill's Folly: How Winston Churchill Created Modern Iraq* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2004), p. 128.

<sup>110</sup> The most comprehensive accounts of the immediate background to Churchill's position before the Cairo Conference are: Rose, *Churchill*, pp. 152–65; and Richard Toye, *Churchill's Empire: The World That Made Him and the World He Made* (London: Macmillan, 2010), pp. 136–61.

<sup>111</sup> Churchill, 'Mesopotamia and the New Government', p. 696. The Mosul vilayet was of great importance to Churchill as it supplied oil to the British navy. As Mosul was threatened by Turkish forces this accounted for the large British

responsibility in the aftermath of the Great War, Churchill had hoped that imperial stability would arise from investing into the 'enormous estates of immense potential value which we have pitifully neglected'.<sup>112</sup>

Policing Mesopotamia through air power would have repercussions for the British Empire as a whole—especially its territories which were east of Suez.<sup>113</sup> As a method of imperial protection, as well as control over its more troublesome colonial subjects, air power lent more gravitas to the empire's prestige and authority. Churchill lauded air power's role in imperial defence as one which gave the empire the ability to negotiate from a position of strength and, even if 'a satisfactory solution' to any kind of confrontation was not immediately apparent, the empire would at least be able to 'maintain a parley'.<sup>114</sup> For Churchill, the Cairo Conference of March 1921 was about saving money whilst bolstering the empire's prestige and power—to imperial rivals as well as its more troublesome subjects.<sup>115</sup> But there were limits to substituting naval for air power,<sup>116</sup> a point which later became obvious when Churchill was Chancellor

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troop presence, to which Churchill objected on grounds of cost—hence his pursuits of air power as a colonial police force.

<sup>112</sup> Gilbert (ed.), *Churchill: CV IV*, 2, Churchill memo, 25 Oct. 1919, p. 939.

<sup>113</sup> Policing troublesome imperial territories was an idea that Churchill thought was suited to Ireland. In fact he advocated the use of aircraft against Sinn Fein in 1920 and suggested that air power be used to 'scatter and stampede them'. See Peter W. Gray, 'The Myths of Air Control and the realities of Imperial Policing', *The Royal Air Force: Air Power Review*, 4/2/ (2001), p. 42; and David E. Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control: The Royal Air Force, 1919–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 40–2.

<sup>114</sup> Churchill, 'Mesopotamia and the New Government', p. 696.

<sup>115</sup> See Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control*, especially chapter 6, 'Indigenous responses to air policing', pp. 107–33; and Philip Towle, *Pilots and Rebels: The Use of Aircraft in Unconventional Warfare, 1918–1988* (London: Brassey's, 1989), p.19–21.

<sup>116</sup> See James S. Corum, 'The RAF in imperial defence, 1919–1956', in Greg Kennedy (ed.), *Imperial Defence: The old world order 1856–1956* (London:

of the Exchequer—no matter what combination of air and naval strength was deployed, imperial power and prestige became weaker the further east one travelled.<sup>117</sup>

Later in 1921, and still being parsimonious, Churchill wrote down his thoughts on the possible renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance and circulated the memorandum to the Cabinet. He wrote that the 'danger to be guarded against' in the Far East was 'the danger from Japan'.<sup>118</sup> Antagonising either Japan or America was likely with whichever power Britain allied itself, but Churchill pointed out that:

In balancing between relying on Japan or relying on America, it is important to trace the consequences in naval armaments. If we rest ourselves upon the United States and establish a great unity of interest with them, Japan is so hopelessly outmatched that there can be no war, and the rivalries in armaments which are the precursors of war would have no purpose. The combatants will be too unequal for the question ever to arise.<sup>119</sup>

Churchill's imperial mindset led him to believe that although Japan was not to be trusted, Japan was not a potential threat if Britain allied itself with its English-speaking transatlantic neighbour—America. Yet in his memoirs, and when

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Routledge, 2008), pp. 152–75; and Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control*, chapter 4, 'The limits of air substitution', pp. 60–83.

<sup>117</sup> For full accounts of Churchill's role in the Cairo Conference of March 1921 see: Catherwood, *Churchill's Folly*; Klieman, *Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World*; and Walter Reid, *Empire of Sand: How Britain Made the Middle East* (Edinburgh: Berliin, 2011).

<sup>118</sup> Martin Gilbert (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: Companion Volume IV, Part 3, April 1921–November 1922* (London: Heinemann, 1977), Churchill memorandum, 4 July 1921, p. 1540.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1541.

taking into account post-war sensibilities as the next chapter illustrates, Churchill did not advance this argument at all. He wrote that he had always applauded the Anglo-Japanese alliance, and that he had regretted how it had been allowed to lapse. Churchill portrayed the advent of war in the Far East as having been the result of the failures of American economic policies and American diplomatic relations. According to Churchill's narrative of the long road to Pearl Harbor, the British Empire had not antagonised Japan. Churchill's 'constant & persistent interference' in imperial matters did not go unnoticed.<sup>120</sup> Losing his electoral seat in November 1922 meant that Churchill could no longer influence imperial affairs. However, after being re-adopted by the Conservatives (so as not to oust their own candidate) and being made Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1924 his influence on imperial matters increased exponentially.

Churchill was not the best keeper of the nation's purse.<sup>121</sup> His return to the Gold Standard damaged British export industry, and this partly precipitated the General Strike of 1926.<sup>122</sup> Domestic stability was one of the three main tenets of his imperialism as a strong home economy, a superior (or at least equal) fleet, and strong international trade provided the British Empire with an aura of power and prestige. After all, confidence breeds confidence. Yet it could be argued that it was as Chancellor of the Exchequer that Churchill did the most damage to the British Empire in the Far East—when he refused to increase the Admiralty's budget for the further development of the Singapore naval base.<sup>123</sup> Churchill exclaimed:

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., Austen Chamberlain to Lord Curzon, 4 July 1921, p. 1542.

<sup>121</sup> Robert Rhodes James (ed.), *Memoirs of a Conservative: J.C.C. Davidson's Memoirs and Papers, 1910–1937* (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 210, cited by Christopher M. Bell, 'Winston Churchill and the Ten Year Rule', *Journal of Military History*, 74 (2010), p. 1106.

<sup>122</sup> See Ryan Brown, 'The Burden of Statesmanship: Churchill as Chancellor, 1924–1929', *Finest Hour*, 153 (2011–2012), pp. 12–20; and Peter Clarke, 'Churchill's Economic Ideas, 1900–1930', in Blake and Louis (eds), *Churchill*, pp. 79–95.

<sup>123</sup> See Brian McAllister Linn, *Guardians of Empire: The U.S. Army and the Pacific, 1902–1940* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1997);

A war with Japan! But why should there be a war with Japan? I do not believe there is the slightest chance of it in our lifetime.<sup>124</sup>

Churchill was not aware of the potential threat Japan posed to the British Empire in the Far East at the time: he simply thought that war would not happen as no boy would take on two giants.<sup>125</sup> Instead, Churchill implied that if there appeared to be no enemy to Britain in home waters (Germany had been temporarily defeated and was being economically punished in the post-Versailles Treaty era), and should the British fleet be needed as far afield as Singapore, Hong Kong,

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James Neidpath, *The Singapore Naval Base and the Defence of Britain's Eastern Empire, 1919–1941* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981); Keith Neilson and Greg Kennedy (eds), *Far-Flung Lines: Studies in Imperial Defence in Honour of Donald Mackenzie Schurman* (London: Routledge, 1997); Keith Neilson, 'Unbroken Thread': Japan, Maritime Power and British Imperial Defence, 1920–32', in Greg Kennedy (ed.), *British Naval Strategy East of Suez, 1900–2000* (Abingdon: Cass, 2005); George Peden, 'The Treasury and defence of empire', in Kennedy (ed.), *Imperial Defence* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 71–90; and Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: Volume I, The Period of Anglo-American Antagonism, 1919–1929* (London: Collins, 1968). The 'Ten Year Rule' rolling defence spending limit is sometimes attributed to Churchill. The rule (where war was not envisaged for another ten years hence no need to rearm frantically) was signed in 1919 and was automatically renewed every year. It is, at times, blamed for Britain's lack of preparedness for war. See Bell, 'Winston Churchill and the Ten Year Rule'; K. Booth, 'The Ten Year Rule—An Unfinished Debate', *RUSIJ*, 116 (1971), pp. 58–62; Stephen Roskill, 'The Ten Year Rule—The Historical Facts', *RUSIJ*, 117 (1972), pp. 69–71; and Peter Silverman, 'The Ten Year Rule', *RUSIJ*, 116 (1971), pp. 42–5.

<sup>124</sup> Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill: Prophet of Truth, 1922–1939* (London: Heinemann, 1976; Minerva, 1990), Churchill to Baldwin, 13 Jan. 1924, p. 76.

<sup>125</sup> Martin Gilbert (ed.), *WSC: CV IV*, 3, Churchill memorandum, 4 July 1921, p. 1541.



Australia, or New Zealand, it would not be a hardship to let the fleet go and defend the honour of the empire.

Churchill's logic was based on the premise, as one historian has noted, that 'Japan would be accommodating enough to mount its challenge at a moment when the U.K. was free to respond'.<sup>126</sup> Although Churchill was not wholly successful in 'killing the idea' of the base at Singapore,<sup>127</sup> his parsimonious arguments did create a lull in the expansion of what was known as the 'Singapore Strategy'.<sup>128</sup> To simply reflect that it was Churchill's awareness of how he had to budget carefully with the Treasury's shallow post-First World War pockets, negates his underlying influence and motivation—his imperialism. Keeping tight control over Admiralty budgets (or any unnecessary expense in the Treasury's eyes) was one way in which Churchill attempted to re-stabilise the domestic budget which would, in turn, help shore up the empire itself. In mid-1921, Churchill's concern over troop budgets had led him to investigate the significant role air power could play in imperial territories in the Middle East. But when he was Chancellor, Churchill had reverted to advocating the importance of a superior navy as the spearhead of the British Empire's force (even if he was not prepared to bankroll it). Perhaps this was a missed opportunity in the Far East.

At the annual dinner for the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on 19 July 1928, Churchill spoke to the collected audience which comprised of the Directors

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<sup>126</sup> Raymond Callahan, 'Churchill and Singapore', in Brian Farrell and Sandy Hunter (eds), *Sixty Years On: The Fall of Singapore Revisited* (Singapore: Eastern University Press, 2002), p. 157.

<sup>127</sup> Robert O'Neill, 'Churchill, Japan and British Security in the Pacific', in Blake and Louis (eds), *Churchill*, p. 279.

<sup>128</sup> See Christopher Bell, 'The "Singapore strategy" and the deterrence of Japan: Winston Churchill, the Admiralty and the dispatch of Force Z', *English Historical Review*, 116/467 (2001), pp. 604–34; Raymond Callahan, 'The Illusion of Security: Singapore 1919–1942', *JCH*, 9/2 (1979), pp. 69–92; Ian Cowman, 'An Admiralty Myth: The Search for an Advanced Far Eastern Fleet Base before the Second World War', *JSS*, 8 (1985), pp. 316–26; Ian Hamill, 'Winston Churchill and the Singapore Naval Base, 1924–1929', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 11/2 (1980), pp. 277–86.

of the Bank of England, as well as Bankers and Merchants from the City of London. As Chancellor, Churchill said, his last four years had been an 'uphill' struggle.<sup>129</sup> He claimed that he had made important economic reductions, especially 'in the sphere of armaments' which were 'conceived on a scale almost incredibly modest compared with the world-wide responsibility of Britain'.<sup>130</sup> He had provided for old-age pensions, widows' pensions and 'improved public services'.<sup>131</sup> And by doing so had kept true to his own particular brand of imperialism, as he knew that empire—its strength, prestige and ultimately its security—began at home. At the same dinner, Churchill said that,

I am inclined to think that when the history of the difficult post-War period is written the decision which led to the resumption of the gold standard will be found to have played a definite part in the consolidation of the financial strength and even leadership of the country.<sup>132</sup>

Ironically, it was Churchill who would write one of the first, and most authoritative, histories of the post-War period.<sup>133</sup>

The general election of June 1929 saw Ramsay MacDonald\* elected as Prime Minister, with a narrow Labour majority, and the end of Churchill's time as Chancellor. Less than six months later, Churchill's vision of India was to be tested to its limit. The Irwin Declaration of October 1929, named after Lord Irwin the Viceroy of India from 1926 to 1931, reinforced the probability that India would, at some point in the future, be eventually granted self-government. As a subaltern, and whilst stationed in Bangalore, Churchill had become sick

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<sup>129</sup> Robert Rhodes James (ed.) *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches, Volume V: 1928–1935* (New York: Chelsea House, 1974), Churchill, Mansion House, London, 19 July, 1928, p. 4496.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4497.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4499.

<sup>133</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The World Crisis: Volumes I–V* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1923–31).

with a fever—an 'Indian fever' which, his mother had warned, was 'very difficult to get rid of'.<sup>134</sup> Churchill was never able to shake off his 'Indian fever' and, along with his 'curious complex about India', he offered his resignation from Baldwin's Shadow Business Committee in January 1931.<sup>135</sup> Perhaps Churchill was hoping that his political bluff would not be called. After all, it was a tactic that his father (as well as a handful of other Victorian politicians) had used.<sup>136</sup> But the world of politics had changed and, in 1931, as Churchill was still distrusted by his fellow Conservatives his resignation was accepted. Churchill may have reached what he called his 'breaking-point' with Baldwin (and the Conservative support for the National government's pursuit of the India Bill),<sup>137</sup> but his Victorian imperialism, and his persistent and dogged attitude to India, and its importance to him, increased.

There was a marked difference between what Churchill uttered in public and what he said in private. One example was the imposition of taxes on non-imperial foodstuffs which was spawned by the protectionism of the Ottawa agreements of 1932. Churchill, albeit grudgingly, accepted the move as

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<sup>134</sup> Randolph S. Churchill (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: Companion Volume I, Part 2, 1896–1900* (London: Heinemann, 1967), Lady Jennie Churchill to Churchill, 29 Oct. 1897, p. 826.

<sup>135</sup> Penderel Moon (ed.), *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal* (Karachi: OUP., 1974), p. 3.

<sup>136</sup> In particular, Gladstone and Salisbury had both previously resigned from their Cabinet positions in a political huff in order to make their point over policy clear. In February 1886, Harcourt, the Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer, had also made the same political bluff when his requests for a cut in the defence estimates were refused by Cabinet. In December 1886, Lord Randolph attempted the same manoeuvre. However, as with all bluffs, political or otherwise, once made, they have to be followed through and to his surprise, Lord Randolph's resignation was accepted.

<sup>137</sup> Churchill, *Gathering Storm*, p. 27.

governmental policy in public yet in private he referred to it as 'Rottowa'.<sup>138</sup> Churchill's decision to 'swallow his distaste in public amounted to a realistic acknowledgement that he could not fight the National Government on all fronts at once'.<sup>139</sup> Churchill brought this pragmatism, this realistic view of the constantly evolving nature of the British Empire to bear during his time as Prime Minister of the wartime coalition government from May 1940. But this pragmatism did not extend to India. There was a distinct separation in Churchill's mind between the British Raj and the rest of the British Empire and it was this stumbling block which he found so difficult to deal with when recounting the miseries which affected the wartime empire situated east of Suez.

Within the first three decades of his political career, Churchill remained loyal to two things: his own career rather than party politics, and to the British Empire. The young Winston may have been intoxicated with the 'heady imperialism of the 1890s',<sup>140</sup> but he was sober when it came to 1931. His frustration reached its peak in January 1931, the same year that Japan invaded Manchuria. Following his resignation, Churchill not only engendered his image as an unrepentant, unreconstructed, Victorian imperialist but also exploited it. As time away from the front benches and his increasing lack of popularity in the early to mid 1930s continued, his literary output increased. Not content with grinding his anti-Indian self-government axe in the national press, Churchill accepted a proposal for another voluminous history in December 1932. He gathered together a syndicate of researchers (albeit a very loose one) in early 1933 in order to start the research for his *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples*.<sup>141</sup> Its subject matter, the growth and superiority of democratic

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<sup>138</sup> Toye citing John Barnes, and David Nicolson (eds), *The Empire At Bay: The Leo Amery Diaries 1929–1945* (London: Hutchinson, 1988), Leo Amery diary entry, 19 July 1934, p. 384, in Toye, *Churchill's Empire*, p. 180.

<sup>139</sup> Toye, *Churchill's Empire*, p. 180.

<sup>140</sup> Paul Addison, 'The Three Careers of Winston Churchill', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth series, 11 (2001), p. 186.

<sup>141</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples: Volumes I–IV* (London: Cassell, 1956–8). Although research was started in 1933, the work was soon put aside as Churchill pursued the advent of German rearmament. The

Parliamentary systems, left little to the imagination as to its author's preference (he was steeped in the Whig tradition), but it also reiterated how such similarities between democracies in Britain and America led to ties closer than a mere common language. Already Churchill's imperial rhetoric was showing signs of, if not weakening, then definitely changing tack.

Realising he was losing the battle over the proposed India Act, his outpourings against Indian self-government certainly lessened towards the end of 1934, and he scrambled to find another cause to champion. Unfortunately he settled on the abdication question, which swiftly became a crisis. In the 1930s – out of power, out of favour and outside any sphere of influence – Churchill was trying to foster a special relationship between America and Britain. To claim he was doing so out of a prophetic sense of what was to befall the British Empire in the Far East is to give Churchill far more credit than he deserves. After all, he continually derided the Japanese, saying that they were not capable of even being a threat. However, the first attempts to cement this tentative relationship were being written by Churchill, and his fledgling syndicate, in 1933. His imperial rhetoric was changing to an Anglo-American rhetoric especially as his unpopularity increased as soon as the word 'India' left his lips.

Churchill would 'stamp his foot and fulminate' on imperial issues, especially when the wartime British Empire was under verbal attack from Roosevelt.<sup>142</sup> But perhaps this intense reaction was done not only to divert attention away from how vulnerable the British Empire in the Far East had become, but also because Churchill had been aware of its weakness since 1912. In an undated memorandum when he was First Sea Lord, Churchill had written that if Britain's naval power collapsed, the only option would be to 'seek the

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outbreak of war, his return to the Admiralty, paper shortages and then becoming Prime Minister, all led to Churchill abandoning the work and then resuming it in the in the mid 1950s once he had retired from his second time as resident of 10 Downing Street. See the forthcoming publication (due May 2012) by Peter Clarke, *Mr Churchill's Profession: The Statesman as Author and the Book That Defined the 'Special Relationship'* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).

<sup>142</sup> Richard Toye, 'Churchill and Empire: Myth and Reality', part of the Churchill Lecture Series, Cabinet War Rooms, London, 22 March 2011.

protection of the United States'.<sup>143</sup> By the end of December 1941, the battle for Hong Kong had been lost. By mid-February 1942, the fortress at Singapore had fallen. By March 1942, American anti-imperialist sentiment was far more vocal than Churchill had thought it would become as the ramifications of the Atlantic Charter of August 1941 became clear. Churchill was forced to mollify American demands for an attempt to broker a political deal with Congress leaders in India, whilst pacifying the British Left, by sending Cripps on his Mission to India. Little wonder that the man who had resigned from the front benches in January 1931 felt compelled, a little over a decade later in November 1942, to remind the empire's subjects, allies and enemies that the British Empire was still a force to be reckoned with. Yet when it came to his memoirs, the endemic and irreversible weakness of the British Empire in the Far East could not be revealed without awkward questions being asked about Churchill's relationship to the empire—or Commonwealth. Churchill's experience and assumptions about the British Empire and India informed his reactions to the wartime imperial crises which confronted him, and his post-war and post-independence portrayal of the war in the Far East.

Within a few months of Churchill having resigned from Baldwin's Shadow Business Cabinet, he asked his friend and confidant, Professor Frederick Lindemann (later Lord Cherwell), to summarise and draw conclusions from the Indian Franchise Committee report, which was created in order to submit proposals on the enfranchisement of the Indian population. The 'Prof', as Lindemann was affectionately known to Churchill, duly did as he was asked and reported that the 'blunder' of the committee was 'in the terms of reference' they had used 'rather than in the way they were implemented'.<sup>144</sup> Apart from the inability of the candidates to keep their electorates informed (due to the vast geography of India and the inability to provide inexpensive wireless equipment

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<sup>143</sup> Randolph S. Churchill (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: Companion Volume II, Part 3, 1911–1914* (London: Heinemann, 1969), Churchill memorandum, c. early 1912, p. p. 1512.

<sup>144</sup> CHAR 2/189/85: Lindemann to Churchill, 1 July 1932.

to the remotest Indian villages),<sup>145</sup> Lindemann believed that there was 'no major issue upon which it would be easy to challenge the proposals of the Committee'.<sup>146</sup> But it was the conclusion Lindemann drew which was startling:

It is pathetic to see these same dictators selecting this very moment of acute danger to impose the blessings of a democratic constitution, which has failed even on a small scale in the educated West, upon a congerie of 340 million illiterate human beings born of innumerable races, speaking hundreds of tongues, torn by traditional hatreds and rent by religious differences, who have fought and massacred one another since the dawn of history and whose rancour and suspicion only await the removal of the impartial rule of Britain to burst once more into a consuming orgy of murder and blood.<sup>147</sup>

This was the sentiment which Churchill evoked time and again when India was under a further period of 'acute danger'—1942.

When reminiscing about the way in which the state of India had been described before the Mutiny of 1857, Churchill's father, Lord Randolph said that 'our Government in India' had been a 'most magnificent machine; but it lived on nothing but character and credit'.<sup>148</sup> What little 'character and credit' the British Empire had, not only in the empire as a whole but essentially in India, at its core, had steadily eroded since the end of the First World War. It was not that Churchill wanted to hide how he had in fact been powerless to prevent this erosion. What he had to hide in his memoirs was the way in which he had

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<sup>145</sup> CHAR 2/189/87: Lindemann report to Churchill on the Indian Franchise Committee, c. June 1932.

<sup>146</sup> CHAR 2/189/88: Lindemann report to Churchill on the Indian Franchise Committee, c. June 1932.

<sup>147</sup> CHAR 2/189/89–90: Lindemann report (conclusion) to Churchill on the Indian Franchise Committee, c. June 1932.

<sup>148</sup> Parl. Debs. (series 3) vol. 292, col. 1540 (4 May 1885).

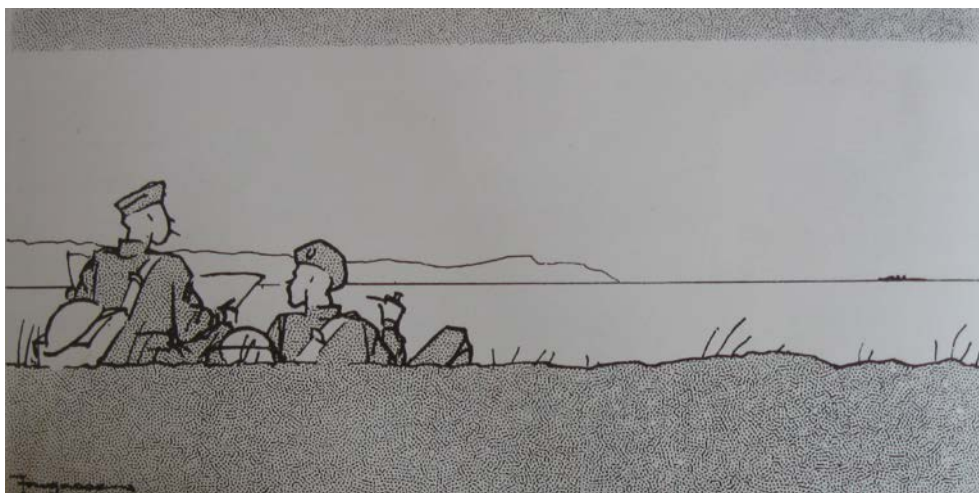
contributed to, if not at times, led the erosion. To have included his defiant declaration of November 1942 would have meant admitting that Britain was no longer a great imperial power, and that, since the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, his imperialism had been pure rhetoric and he had paid nothing but lip service to both the empire and American anti-imperialist sensibilities. As Churchill wanted the opportunity to work alongside American post-war strategy, in his capacity as Prime Minister of a peacetime Britain, his imperialism had to be toned down or even muted. After all, in March 1946, he had declared to the world that 'if the Western democracies stand together ... no one is likely to molest them. If however they become divided or falter in their duty ... catastrophe may well overcome us all'.<sup>149</sup> He succeeded in this by glancing as infrequently eastwards in his memoirs as his narrative would allow. Without Churchill, the empire would still have crumbled, but his part in its downfall needed to be glossed over, if not ignored. The idea that the British Empire was in rude health at the same time as Churchill was born, and the empire's health began to fail when Churchill's did, is an intriguing coincidence.

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<sup>149</sup> Robert Rhodes James (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches, 1987–1963, Volume VII, 1943–1949* (New York: Chelsea House, 1974), Churchill, 'The Sinews of Peace', Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri, 5 Mar. 1946, p. 7292.



**Illustration II**



As two soldiers look out across the White Cliff of Dover, one turns to the other and says: 'So our poor empire is alone in the world'. His mate replies, 'Aye, we are—the whole five hundred million of us'.

Fougasse, *Punch*, 17 July 1940.

### Chapter III: Churchill's Portrayal of the Advent of War with Japan

There was a veil over my mind about the Japanese War. All the proportions were hidden in mist.<sup>1</sup>

The 'veil' over Churchill's mind about the possibility of war with Japan was lifted by the 'supreme world event'<sup>2</sup> of the Japanese attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941.<sup>3</sup> Churchill found this 'felon blow'<sup>4</sup> very significant—although 'the mastery of the Pacific had passed into Japanese hands,'<sup>5</sup> America was now officially in the war.<sup>6</sup> The Anglo-American alliance, the special relationship which he had nurtured for so long, could finally be formally declared and acknowledged the world over. It had arguably been a

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<sup>1</sup> DEKE 1: Reader Correspondence: Denis Kelly, quoting Churchill, to Martin Gilbert, 11 Oct. 1988.

<sup>2</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Volume III, The Grand Alliance* (London: Cassell, 1950), p. 538.

<sup>3</sup> The attack on Pearl Harbor continues to be extensively researched. The best accounts are: Akira Iriye, *Pearl Harbor and the Coming of the Pacific War: A Brief History with Documents and Essays* (Boston, USA: Bedford, 1999); William Bruce Johnson, *The Pacific Campaign in World War II: From Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal* (London: Routledge, 2006); Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun: The American War with Japan* (London: Viking, 1984); Iguchi Takeo, *Demystifying Pearl Harbor: A New Perspective from Japan* (Tokyo: International House of Japan, 2010); and John Toland, *Infamy: Pearl Harbor and its Aftermath* (London: Methuen, 1982).

<sup>4</sup> Churchill, BBC broadcast, London, 13 May 1945 in David Cannadine (ed.), *The Speeches of Winston Churchill* (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 262.

<sup>5</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 545.

<sup>6</sup> America and Britain both declared war against Japan on 8 Dec. 1941.

long road to Pearl Harbor, one which stretched back beyond the *kurai tanima* or 'dark valley' to the aftermath of the First World War.<sup>7</sup>

Why did Churchill pay so little attention in his memoirs to the advent of war with Japan? It was perhaps due to the personal advantage that focusing on Germany's rearmament in the 1930s ostensibly afforded him. Did Churchill skim over the history of the long road to Pearl Harbor because, like successive British governments since the Anglo-Japanese alliance had been officially terminated in 1923, his wartime national government had no realistic policy in place for dealing with a rival imperial power in the Far East?<sup>8</sup> What led Churchill to underestimate a rival imperial power that in both 1894 and 1904 had launched a surprise assault that was 'so accurately timed' and 'so skilfully delivered', that they had shown themselves to be formidable enemies?<sup>9</sup> In short, what did Churchill have to hide?

This chapter will examine the way in which Churchill portrayed the advent of the war with Japan. The chapter will begin with his depiction of the way in which the Anglo-Japanese alliance came to an end before going on to consider the Washington Conference of 1921, the ramifications of the Great Depression of 1929, and the Manchurian crisis of 1931. The chapter will

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<sup>7</sup> Audrey Sansbury Talks, *A Tale of Two Japans: 10 Years to Pearl Harbor* (Brighton: Book Guild Publishing, 2010), p. xi. This ten-year period is generally taken to mean the decade from 1931, starting with Japan's invasion of Manchuria.

<sup>8</sup> Whitehall had continually underestimated Japanese military strength throughout the 1930s and this underestimation, along with the reality of imperial overstretch in the Far East, arguably shaped British Far Eastern policy at this time. See Anthony Best, 'Constructing an Image: British Intelligence and Whitehall's Perception of Japan, 1931–1939', *Intelligence and National Security*, 11/3 (1996), and "'This Probably Over-Valued Military Power": British Intelligence and Whitehall's Perception of Japan, 1939–41', *Intelligence and National Security*, 12/3 (1997).

<sup>9</sup> Randolph S. Churchill (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: Companion Volume I: Part I: 1874–1896* (London: Heinemann, 1967), Churchill to Lady Jennie Churchill, 19 Sep. 1894, p. 522.

illustrate how Churchill differentiated between the long-term and the short-term reasons for the war with Japan, and how he placed the onus, for the outbreak of the Pacific war on American economic and diplomatic failings during the interwar years. The short-term causes of the outbreak of war in the Pacific in December 1941 were narrated by Churchill as emanating from the diplomatic failure of the American-Japanese negotiations of 1941 and the American-initiated economic sanctions of the same year.<sup>10</sup> The brevity with which Churchill outlined the long and short-term reasons for the outbreak of war from the British perspective will also be examined.

Churchill's first volume of memoirs, *The Gathering Storm*, was primarily devoted to promoting his thesis that there had never been a war more preventable than the Second World War.<sup>11</sup> The first volume had originally been intended to deal with the interwar years, the outbreak of war in Europe, Churchill's return to the Admiralty, and his first seven months as war-time Prime Minister. The first volume was to span the period 1919 to the end of 1940, and would consist of three books.<sup>12</sup> Having solicited the opinion of his syndicate, Churchill felt compelled to amalgamate the three books originally planned into two; and, as Reynolds noted, this meant that Churchill 'further condensed his already brief

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<sup>10</sup> See Michael A. Barnhart, 'Japan's Economic Security and the Origins of the Pacific War', *JSS*, 4/2 (1981), pp. 105–24. Barnhart convincingly argues that American economic sanctions did not act as the major impetus for Japan to attack Pearl Harbor. Rather it was the internal tension between the Japanese navy and army which pushed Japan to war. See also Michael A. Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War: The Search for Economic Security, 1919–1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987; repr. 1988) in which his thesis is analysed in more detail and which partially backs up Churchill's assertion that the 'immediate cause of the Pacific War was the failure of the Hull-Nomura negotiations', p. 263.

<sup>11</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Volume I, The Gathering Storm* (London: Cassell, 1948), pp. 3–15.

<sup>12</sup> CHUR 4/25A/179: Churchill to Henry Luce, 19 Feb. 1947.

account of the 1920s'.<sup>13</sup> A sharply-reduced word limit gave Churchill the opportunity to gloss over his own less reputable past and to merely touch upon issues which, in hindsight, he had either not taken seriously or had been completely wrong about. After all, he was presenting himself to the post-war world as omniscient, and as central to the world political stage: to have revealed his weaknesses would surely have defeated the object of his memoirs.

Churchill was not just setting the scene for his theory that the Second World War had been an unnecessary war, he was also emphasising how his own political life had followed similar fortunes to that of Britain and her Empire—it was a tale of defeat into victory. Churchill's defeat was his time in the 'political wilderness' whereas his victory was leading Britain, eventually aided by her Allies, to the defeat of the Axis powers.<sup>14</sup> Of his time in the wilderness, Churchill wrote that it had enabled him to be free from 'ordinary Party antagonisms' and that this freedom allowed him, along with only a few cohorts, to become pre-occupied with the alarming rate at which Germany was rearming.<sup>15</sup> By emphasising how the dangers of German rearmament became his *raison d'être*, Churchill cultivated the image that his voice had been the loudest (of only a handful) to warn of the impending danger of Nazi Germany. But what of Japan? Why did Churchill make no reference to the fact that the initial spur to British rearmament was Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931?<sup>16</sup> What of the growing ambitions of the rival imperial power in the Far East which had been described, in 1936, as 'the Eastern Menace'?<sup>17</sup>

Churchill's first reference to Japan was a surprisingly loaded gun, especially as his memoirs were an attempt to court American post-war opinion in order to highlight how integral he remained to the international political stage. The loaded gun came in the form of Churchill placing the onus for the

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<sup>13</sup> David Reynolds, *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), p. 85.

<sup>14</sup> Churchill, *Gathering Storm*, p. 527.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 100.

<sup>17</sup> Union of Democratic Control, *Eastern Menace: The Story of Japanese Imperialism* (London: Union of Democratic Control, 1936).

deterioration in Anglo-Japanese relations during the interwar period, and the ending of the formal Anglo-Japanese Alliance, solely on pressure from America. As Churchill put it:

The United States made it clear to Britain that the continuance of her alliance with Japan ... would constitute a barrier in Anglo-American relations. Accordingly this alliance was brought to an end.<sup>18</sup>

Churchill continued to remark how this pressure from America led to a 'profound impression' in Japan that she was being spurned by Western powers, and that this inevitably led to links being ripped apart—links which 'might afterwards have proved of decisive value to peace'.<sup>19</sup> He cited the increase in American diplomatic pressure on Britain, and the increased American presence in the Pacific, as reasons why Japan had felt ill-treated by the Western powers and had, in consequence, watched the situation in Europe with an 'attentive eye'.<sup>20</sup>

Churchill's cursory narrative of the events that led to war with Japan implied that, since its formal inception in 1902, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had encountered few, if any, problems, and that it had ended at America's behest.<sup>21</sup> Churchill wrote that the Japanese had 'punctiliously conformed' to the Alliance and had been worthy partners.<sup>22</sup> The overall impression of his narrative was that *had* the Anglo-Japanese Alliance been maintained, Britain would somehow have been able to prevent Japanese imperial ambitions or, at the very least, to restrict

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<sup>18</sup> Churchill, *Gathering Storm*, p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Although the Anglo-Japanese Alliance may have been formalised in 1902, an informal relationship (and one which went through on-off stages) had existed since the Iwakura mission of 1872–4. See Ian Nish, 'Origins of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance: In the shadow of the Dreibund', in Phillips Payson O'Brien (ed.), *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902–1922* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 8–25, for the long view of the history of the 1902 Alliance.

<sup>22</sup> Churchill, *Gathering Storm*, p. 11.

their imperial goals through alliance leverage. In turn, this implied that Britain had been the dominant partner in the Anglo-Japanese relationship and that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was as strong in 1921 as it had always been. Churchill's narrative implied that if Britain's diplomats had not given in to American pressure to formally end such a reliable alliance then the Pacific war could well have been averted.

This typically Churchillian reductive hypothesis fitted in with his overall theme of the first volume of memoirs: that there had never been a more easily preventable war. Yet Churchill extended his counterfactual even further when he implied that had British diplomats not been swayed by American demands to end the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in the early 1920s, then the British Empire would not have suffered such ignominious defeats during the war. If the Pacific war had been avoidable, the crumbling of the British Empire in the Far East would therefore not have occurred.<sup>23</sup> This was an extreme counterfactual, but it was one which nonetheless had impact. In fact, one recent study of British decolonisation has suggested that allowing the Anglo-Japanese Alliance to end was 'one of the gravest errors of twentieth-century British diplomacy' as it meant that Britain's empire in the Far East was left 'exposed'.<sup>24</sup> In reality, Britain's empire in the Far East had been 'exposed' for a very long time. Was the Anglo-Japanese Alliance as strong as Churchill suggested, and was it really worth saving?<sup>25</sup> Did American pressure really affect British policy? And would Britain have been able to control Japan's imperial ambitions? The most important question however is why did Churchill, who was usually so careful to be uncritical of American policy, place

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<sup>23</sup> This is not to say that the British Empire in the Far East would ultimately not have crumbled. Changing wartime and post-war sensibilities implied that it would have done, but it may not have disintegrated at such an exponential rate.

<sup>24</sup> L. J. Butler, *Britain and Empire: Adjusting to a Post-Imperial World* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), p. 24.

<sup>25</sup> For a comprehensive and persuasive argument over the myth surrounding the contemporary perception of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance see: Anthony Best, 'The "Ghost" of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance: An Examination into Historical Myth-Making', *Historical Journal*, 49/3 (2006), pp. 811–31.

the onus for the Pacific war on what he saw as the failings of interwar American diplomacy?

In reality, by 1921, ending the Anglo-Japanese Alliance suited Britain. The Alliance had a rolling renewal attached to it and it had been renewed in 1905, 1911, and had been due to be renewed again in 1921.<sup>26</sup> The alternative to renewal was to simply let it expire. Churchill claimed, in his memoirs, that it had been 'with sorrow' that he had been 'a party to the ending of the British alliance with Japan'—an alliance from which both Britain and Japan had 'derived both strength and advantage'.<sup>27</sup> Contrary to Churchill's portrayal, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had encountered problems since its inception. These were the teething problems that all young alliances encountered, but these problems became more pronounced at the outbreak of the First World War. In 1914 Churchill may have been 'appalled by Sir Edward Grey's reluctance to accede to the Japanese proposal that they should become full belligerents', but his communiqués with Grey revealed that Churchill was certainly aware of an almost menacing imperial undercurrent emanating from the Japanese.<sup>28</sup> Churchill minuted Grey and warned him that his actions towards the Japanese (such as denying them full belligerent status) were likely to 'easily give mortal offence' which would 'not be forgotten'.<sup>29</sup>

Churchill clearly displayed that he had some knowledge of the Japanese 'race', even if his knowledge was loosely based on Victorian racist assumptions. But his imperialism stopped him from comprehending that whatever territorial gains Japan made at Germany's expense, they would possibly not be enough to

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<sup>26</sup> Robert J. Gowen, 'British Legerdemain at the 1911 Imperial Conference: The Dominions, Defense Planning, and the Renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance', *JMH*, 52/3 (1980).

<sup>27</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 516.

<sup>28</sup> Robert O'Neill, 'Churchill, Japan, and British Security in the Pacific, 1904–1942', in Roger Blake and Wm. Roger Louis (eds), *Churchill: A Major New Assessment of his Life in Peace and War* (Oxford: OUP, 1993), p. 276.

<sup>29</sup> O'Neill, 'Churchill, Japan, and British Security in the Pacific', p. 276, referencing Martin Gilbert (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: Volume III, 1914–1916* (London: Heinemann, 1971), Churchill to Grey, 11 Aug. 1914, p. 43.



satisfy Japan, and that the British Empire in the Far East would remain stable.<sup>30</sup> But, ever the Admiralty man, Churchill feared 'a naval setback in the Pacific if Britain were not generous to Japan'.<sup>31</sup> This fear illustrated the general acceptance in Whitehall that should a war break out in both home and Far Eastern waters then home waters would be defended first and foremost, and the Far East would be left exposed. This fear led Churchill to accept that to have Japan on side was better than any alternative.<sup>32</sup> In fact, Churchill sent a telegram to Admiral Yashiro, the Japanese Marine Minister, expressing his

warm feelings of comradeship and pleasure with which the officers & men of the British Navy will find themselves allied in a common cause & against a common foe with the gallant & seamanlike Navy of Japan.<sup>33</sup>

Germany declared war on Japan on 23 August 1914. Although Britain did not request a Japanese squadron in the Mediterranean,<sup>34</sup> Churchill believed that such

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<sup>30</sup> Churchill was not alone in this assumption: for example Grey also thought that Japanese imperial gains would not pose a threat to the British Empire.

<sup>31</sup> Gilbert, *Churchill: III*, p. 42.

<sup>32</sup> Robert J. Gowen, 'Great Britain and the Twenty-One Demands of 1915: Cooperation versus Effacement', *Journal of Military History*, 43/1 (1971), pp. 76–106.

<sup>33</sup> Gilbert, *Churchill: III*, p. 42.

<sup>34</sup> The Japanese Navy did however help the British to suppress the Singapore mutiny, that of the 5 Light Infantry in February 1915: see Ian Beckett, 'The Singapore mutiny of February, 1915', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 62 (1984); Nicholas Tarling, 'The Singapore Mutiny of 1915', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 55/2 (1982); Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, Its Officers and Men* (London: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 425–7; and Budheswar Pati, *India and the First World War, 1914–1918* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 1996), pp. 128–30.

an invitation would have been taken as a compliment.<sup>35</sup> Churchill's spat with Grey over whether Japan's demands should be granted illustrated the precarious nature of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Britain was certainly not as dominant as was presumed, and the idea that Japan could be trusted due to her stance and actions on the Allied side in the Great War was clearly erroneous. Churchill's memoirs certainly did not portray this reality.

Having hardly been mentioned in the first two volumes of memoirs, Japan, let alone the long road to Pearl Harbor, was conspicuous by its absence.<sup>36</sup> As the overall theme of Churchill's first volume was how he had been one of a 'very small circle' who regarded Berlin with concern during the 1930s, this conspicuous absence of the Japanese made Churchill's tale easier to tell.<sup>37</sup> His lack of attention to the Far East in the first two volumes could be explained by the fact that as Japan did not officially enter the Second World War until 7 December 1941, Japan did not figure in the chronology of the war until then. But, as Reynolds astutely observes, what of Japan's invasion of Manchuria?<sup>38</sup> After all, this was the initial reason behind Britain's rearmament in the early 1930s, and the implication was clear—Whitehall was clearly concerned over this Japanese show of strength. Strangely Churchill did not portray the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 in the same light as he depicted the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935. He wrote that Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia had been partly to avenge Italian pride for the 'defeat and shame' at Adowa in 1896, as well as being a quest for imperial expansion.<sup>39</sup> But most significantly of all, he wrote that Mussolini's action had 'played its part in the advent of the Second World War'.<sup>40</sup> Why, therefore, did Churchill skip over the importance of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931? Why did Churchill relegate the war in the Far East, let alone the advent of war against Japan, to nothing more than a sideshow? The reason, simply put, was America.

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<sup>35</sup> Gilbert, *Churchill: III*, p. 44.

<sup>36</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 189

<sup>37</sup> Churchill, *Gathering Storm*, p. 64.

<sup>38</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 100.

<sup>39</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 71.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

Churchill portrayed the invasion of Manchuria as being indelibly linked with the 'sudden and violent tempest' that swept over Wall Street in October 1929.<sup>41</sup> He had already referred to the American diplomatic pressure on Britain in the early 1920s to forego the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. By citing America's subsequent economic failure, and how the 'consequences of this dislocation of economic life became world-wide', Churchill impressed upon the reader that the reasons behind Japan's long march to war were causally related to America.<sup>42</sup>

According to Churchill, Japan had been no less affected by the Great Depression than any other part of the world. Her rising population required secure import and export markets.<sup>43</sup> But it was Japan's close economic reliance upon China, especially after American and European tariffs were imposed on Japanese goods, that led Japan in September 1931, 'on a pretext of local disorder',<sup>44</sup> to invade and occupy Mukden, the zone of the Manchurian railway.<sup>45</sup> Whilst he included Japan's precarious post-Wall Street Crash economy, Churchill failed to mention the way in which the American economy had been dependent upon raw materials imported from South-East Asia (such as tin and rubber), and therefore failed to place in context why, 'from the first shot', America had been outraged on China's behalf.<sup>46</sup> But as America had not joined the League of Nations, there was little that America could have done to halt the tide of Japanese imperialism. This rising imperial tide, Churchill acknowledged, was a concern to Whitehall, but not one which could be acted upon because the abandonment of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance meant that Britain could not exert much influence on Japan. Once again, Churchill placed the onus for the long road to Pearl Harbor at America's door as he asserted that had isolationist

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<sup>41</sup> Churchill, *Gathering Storm*, p. 27.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>45</sup> For details of the Mukden incident which led to the Manchurian crisis see: W. G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), pp. 175–97; and Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>46</sup> Churchill, *Gathering Storm*, p. 68.

America joined the League of Nations, then the League might have been able to punish Japan over Manchuria, and could have halted her imperial aggrandisement.<sup>47</sup> Churchill concluded that it was America's interwar diplomatic and economic failings which had driven Japan into the arms of Germany.<sup>48</sup>

The diplomatic pressure to which Churchill referred was the Washington Conference of 1921 to 1922.<sup>49</sup> After the First World War, Japan had been raised by its association with the victors to what Churchill called 'third place among the world's naval Powers, and certainly to the highest rank'.<sup>50</sup> In order to quell the potentially troublesome atmosphere in the Far East, the three main naval powers who each had vested economic or imperial interests in the Pacific (Britain, America and Japan) agreed to adhere to the 'ratio of strength in capital ships' of five, five and three.<sup>51</sup> In his memoirs, Churchill emphasised that 'as we had to choose between Japanese and American friendship I had no doubts what our course should be'.<sup>52</sup> But he did not refer to the way in which America was applying financial pressure on Britain and was insisting that Britain pay her war debt (or at least the interest on it) back to America. The implication of

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>48</sup> See illustration III which depicts American isolationism as the first victim of Japan's imperial march forward, p. 122.

<sup>49</sup> The conference was held in Washington D.C., from 12 November 1921–6 February 1922, and was set-up and held without the aid of the League of Nations but with their tacit approval. The most all-encompassing publication on the Washington Conference is Erik Goldstein and John Maurer (eds), *The Washington Conference, 1921–22: Naval Rivalry, East Asian Stability and the Road to Pearl Harbor* (London: Cass, 1994). Individual works of note are Phillips Payson O'Brien, *British and American Naval Power: Politics and Policy, 1900–1936* (London: Greenwood, 1998); and Emily O. Goldman, *Sunken Treaties: Naval Arms Control between the Wars* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 1994).

<sup>50</sup> Churchill, *Gathering Storm*, p. 11.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 516.

Churchill's narrative was that the Washington conference signalled the informal beginning of what would become a 'special relationship' between America and Britain with the end of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Although the conference allowed Japan to maintain her naval power, it was not admitted to the first rank which, Churchill claimed, led to resentment in Japanese minds and 'cleared the way for war'.<sup>53</sup>

Increased American fears over Japanese strategic positions in the West Pacific, British fears over the potential threat posed by the Japanese navy to British naval superiority, and British imperial interests in the Pacific in general were all reasons why the Washington conference came about. The aim of the conference was to prevent a naval arms race between the three Pacific powers. Neither America nor Britain could afford (whether financially, or even morally) an arms race in the early 1920s so they aimed to agree to limit each others' respective naval power (as well as Japan's) whilst maintaining autonomy and a degree of supremacy. Churchill was correct to imply that the war in the Far East was evidence that the conference ultimately failed in its goal. Despite American and British attempts to mollify Japan, and to limit Japan's imperial ambitions by limiting her naval power, Japan still invaded and occupied Manchuria in 1931. Over a decade later, when world conditions presaged success, Japan provoked war with America by attacking Pearl Harbor. Within hours of this assault Britain declared war on Japan, just as Churchill had promised he would do. But he failed to mention one aspect of the origins of the conference, which was how America could not decide who was the biggest threat to its vested interests in the Pacific—Britain or Japan.<sup>54</sup> To have included this in his memoirs would have placed the special relationship on an altogether different basis from the outset. A portrayal of English-speaking rivalry would have seriously altered the portrait of a united English-speaking peoples which Churchill was promoting in the aftermath of the

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<sup>53</sup> Churchill, *Gathering Storm*, p. 12.

<sup>54</sup> See Keith Neilson, "'Unbroken Thread": Japan, Maritime Power and British Imperial Defence, 1920–32', in Greg Kennedy (ed.), *British Naval Strategy East of Suez, 1900–2000* (Abingdon: Cass, 2005); and Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: Volume I, The Period of Anglo-American Antagonism, 1919–1929* (London: Collins, 1968).

war—a portrayal which would possibly have had a detrimental effect not just on his standing and reputation, but also on Britain's position in the post-war world hierarchy.

The next indication that Churchill gave regarding a war brewing in the Far East was an incredibly short paragraph on the 1936 Anti-Comintern Pact which had been 'hastily inserted in chapter twelve'.<sup>55</sup> The purpose of this hurried addition had been to illustrate how Churchill had been aware in the mid-1930s of the situation in Asia; that whilst he may have been focused upon the gathering storm of Nazism, he was nonetheless fully cognisant on worldwide matters. However this paragraph seems incongruous with the rest of the chapter, as it reveals how Churchill, both at the time and over a decade later when he was compiling his memoirs, thought the situation in Asia to be nothing more than a distraction and a sideshow.<sup>56</sup> In fact, when Churchill came to write his memoirs, it was obvious that he still regarded the long-term reasons for the advent of war in the Far East as nothing more than an introduction to the event which he had been waiting for—Pearl Harbor. The long-term reasons why Japan went to war did not distract or concern Churchill either at the time or when he was recalling them a decade later. What really concerned Churchill were the short-term reasons for Japan's entry to the war, and it was upon these that he concentrated in his memoirs. It was Deakin's suggestion that the history behind Japan's entry into the war should be placed as a stand-alone chapter in the third volume where it would serve as a tidy, and timely, 'introduction to their entry into war'.<sup>57</sup> Commenting on an early draft of this chapter, Orme Sargent could not 'help feeling that the average reader would be glad to have his memory refreshed' as to why Japan had been aggressive over Indo-China.<sup>58</sup> A career diplomat, civil

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<sup>55</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 101. This paragraph amounted to a total of seven lines, and 76 words. Churchill, *Gathering Storm*, p. 168.

<sup>56</sup> Chapter 12, 'The Loaded Pause: Spain, 1936–7', which dealt with not only the civil war in Spain but also Edward VIII's abdication, the coronation of King George VI, Baldwin's retirement and Chamberlain's appointment as PM: Churchill, *Gathering Storm*, pp. 162–75.

<sup>57</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, citing Deakin, p. 101.

<sup>58</sup> CHUR 4/251A/248: Sargent to Churchill, undated.

servant, and a man who, like Churchill, predicted a 'communist avalanche over Europe and the reduction of Britain to a second-class power' in 1945,<sup>59</sup> Sargent advocated a summary of Japan's relations with Great Britain and America and an explanation of the 'deplorable cancellation of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty' as useful to the reader.<sup>60</sup> Considering that hardly any time or space had been directed towards this history, it is no wonder that Churchill thought it sound advice. But Churchill was more than willing to do this as it would lend more gravitas to several of his themes: the commonalities that Britain and America had shared at the beginning of their respective wars; the defeats which they turned into victory; and how this special relationship would and should continue in the postwar world, especially if Churchill were returned to 10 Downing Street.

The long-term causes of the advent of war with Japan were portrayed by Churchill as attributable to the diplomatic and economic failings of interwar America. Considering that one of Churchill's primary reasons for writing his memoirs had been to increase his stature in America, this literary strategy seems, at first, to be rather ill-planned. Yet what alternative was there? The only other plausible option was for Churchill to place equal, if not more, blame on the shoulders of the British Empire. To have made such an admission would have implied that the British Empire in the Far East had been weak and vulnerable. The image of the weary Titan unable to defend itself in the Far East if it were threatened at the same time in Europe or the Middle East was one which Churchill wanted to avoid, even if it meant wrongly blaming a country to which he owed so much and which in the post-war world he still had to court and woo. Without a doubt, Churchill cleverly made a virtue out of the situation he was faced with. In other words, to attribute the long-range causes of the war in the Far East to interwar American failings suited one of his overarching themes—to turn defeat into victory. It enabled him to enforce his portrayal of the symbiotic foundation of the so-called 'special relationship' between America and Britain which he had confirmed to the world at Fulton in March 1946. This portrayal

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<sup>59</sup> Ritchie Owendale, 'Sargent, Sir (Harold) Orme Garton (1884–1962)', *ODNB* (Oxford: OUP, 2004; online edn, Jan. 2008).

<sup>60</sup> CHUR 4/251A/248: Sargent to Churchill, undated.

enabled him to misdirect the reader away from the British Empire's role in provoking war with Japan, as well as his own.

Churchill emphasised how Anglo-Japanese relations were (in 1939), 'by no means friendly'; but also pointed out that there was little love lost between Japan and Germany either.<sup>61</sup> He wrote:

When, on the eve of the European war, Germany made her Non-Aggression Pact with Russia without consulting or informing Japan, her Anti-Comintern partner, the Japanese felt with reason that they had been ill-used.<sup>62</sup>

Feeling 'ill-used' however, was not the sole reason for Japan's imperial aggression. According to Churchill's portrayal of a nation which he had previously described as 'inscrutable',<sup>63</sup> the Japanese took advantage of the 'supreme convulsions' that shook the world in September 1939.<sup>64</sup> Despite the power struggle between the Japanese Army and the Japanese Navy, Japan saw an opportunity to gain imperial possessions from her imperial neighbours in the Far East (France, Britain and the Netherlands) when war in Europe broke out. Churchill appeared to excuse Japan for feeling such imperial jealousy: 'was Japan to gain nothing ... ? Had not her historic moment come?'<sup>65</sup> By signing the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy, Japan was bound to enter 'the European war on the Axis side if America should enter it on behalf of Britain'.<sup>66</sup> Although

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 519.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 516. The irony should not be lost on the reader for whilst Churchill happily described the Japanese mind-set as inscrutable, it was obviously not inscrutable to him as he set about explaining it to his reader! Another example of how hindsight was, for Churchill, a well-used tool in his literary lexicon.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 519.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 520.



Churchill implied that Japan was playing a waiting game,<sup>67</sup> he also wrote that it was the potential combined strength of Britain and America, with 'the two strongest navies afloat and with resources which, once developed, were measureless and incomparable', which prompted the Japanese to seek a diplomatic compromise with America in early 1941.<sup>68</sup> But before negotiations began in earnest, and before Churchill portrayed them as a failure of American diplomacy, there was the little matter of Churchill and his appeasement of the Japanese that he needed to conceal—the closure of the Burma Road.

When Japan invaded and occupied Burma in January 1942, Churchill was humiliated. One reason for his humiliation was that he had previously acquiesced in Japanese demands, in July 1940, to close the Burma Road and thereby suspend supplies to China.<sup>69</sup> That Churchill suffered humiliation was evident from his lack of reference to the closure of the Road.<sup>70</sup> Churchill's narrative silences tend to mask something, and this is certainly true regarding the closure of the Burma Road. His silence illustrated the ignominy he felt at having carried out what could be judged in the post-war world as an act of 'appeasement'. In July 1940, closing the Road and therefore temporarily appeasing Japan may possibly have been the only solution; as Churchill said, had he 'refused the Japanese demand things would immediately become extremely dangerous'.<sup>71</sup> He also confirmed that whilst the Cabinet had agreed to this manoeuvre, it had been his doing—'our decision was *my* doing'.<sup>72</sup> Before Chamberlain waved that now infamous piece

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Volume II: Their Finest Hour* (London: Cassell, 1949), p. 225.

<sup>70</sup> Churchill made only two references to the closure of the Burma Road in his memoirs. As referenced above (p. 225), and when he minuted Eden, 'would it not be a good thing to give it a miss for a month or so, and see what happens?' Churchill, *Their Finest Hour*, Appendix A, Churchill to Eden, 20 July 1940, p. 571.

<sup>71</sup> A.J.P. Taylor (ed.), *Off the Record: W. P. Crozier, Political Interviews, 1933–1943* (London: Hutchinson, 1973), Churchill to Crozier, 26 July 1940, p. 176.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

of paper at Heston aerodrome on 30 September 1938, the term 'appeasement' had always had positive, or at least neutral, connotations. 'Appeasement' had implied an act of defusing conflict, but under the aegis of Churchill's memoirs the term took on a negative slant where it was translated as 'purchasing peace for one's own interests by sacrificing the interests of others'.<sup>73</sup> Whilst Churchill was happy to hold the anti-appeasement mirror up to others, he certainly did not want to look into it himself, especially over the closure of the Burma Road, and even more so when he was composing his memoirs. To apply his 'critique of appeasement' to his own action over the Road would have completely distorted the image he was building up of himself in the first two volumes,<sup>74</sup> especially as he had cast himself as the main bulwark against appeasement, and had suggested that this had been one of the main reasons why he became Prime Minister in May 1940.

Churchill portrayed the re-opening of the Road as a measure which came from strength. Because Germany had not invaded Britain, and 'the light of the British Empire burned brighter and fiercer', world conditions were much less favourable to the Japanese.<sup>75</sup> Churchill also revealed however, that reopening the Burma Road could have provoked the Japanese. He stipulated in his memoirs that he had suggested that if the President were to send 'an American [naval] squadron, the bigger the better, to pay a friendly visit to Singapore' then this, would have had a 'marked deterrent effect upon a Japanese declaration of war upon us over the Burma Road reopening'.<sup>76</sup> Reynolds noted that although Churchill had written 'nothing' about the closure of the Burma Road, he had made a 'brief allusion' to the road being reopened in October 1940.<sup>77</sup> Perhaps Reynolds is being too generous when he states that this oversight of Churchill's was merely 'another example of hasty drafting and general inattention to the Far

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<sup>73</sup> Donald Cameron Watt, 'Churchill and Appeasement', in Blake and Louis (eds), *Churchill*, p. 200.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>75</sup> Churchill, *Their Finest Hour*, p. 440.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 190.

East'.<sup>78</sup> In July 1940, Churchill had declared that closing the Road had been an attempt 'to stave off trouble for the time being in the hope and belief that our situation might become better in the future'.<sup>79</sup> In reality it had left Burma vulnerable to invasion. His lack of comprehension of the extent of Japan's imperial ambition, especially when coupled with his inability to see the potential weakness of British imperial rule east of Suez, was a stumbling block during the war. It became no less so when he was recounting the situation for his memoirs. This is possibly why Churchill was so eager to gloss over one of the short-term causes of the outbreak of war with Japan. By 1950, Churchill could do nothing but admit that his priorities in 1941 had been:

first, the defence of the Island [Britain], including the threat of invasion and the U-boat war; secondly, the struggle in the Middle East and Mediterranean; thirdly, after June, supplies to Soviet Russia; and, last of all, resistance to a Japanese assault.<sup>80</sup>

To have done otherwise would have roused the ire of his post-war critics.<sup>81</sup> By quietly and quickly dealing with his part in provoking Japanese aggression, and by sandwiching it between his portrayal of American economic and diplomatic failings, Churchill hoped that his 'appeasement' of the Japanese would be overshadowed, especially by his continued narrative of the failings of American economic and diplomatic policy. Only it was updated to reflect its immediate short term effect—Pearl Harbor.

As previously mentioned, Deakin had suggested that a chapter on the immediate pre-war situation in the Far East should appear in the third volume of the memoirs. Such a chapter would act as an introduction not only to Pearl Harbor, and America's official entry into the war, but also to the Far East as a

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Taylor (ed.), *Off the Record*, Churchill to Crozier, 26 July 1940, p. 176.

<sup>80</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 522–23.

<sup>81</sup> Michael Foot (MP) was one such critic who noticed the 'virtual omission of Japan from volume one', cited by Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 142.

whole. The first glimpse of Deakin's work was in the chapter entitled 'The Japanese Envoy'.<sup>82</sup> The title suggested that the chapter would be about the negotiations with Japan in the months before Pearl Harbor. It was meant to chronologically locate the advent of war with Japan in the memoirs, especially as Churchill had virtually ignored the Far East up to that point in his history. The overall impression which this chapter gave was that Churchill (on behalf of Britain and her empire) had done everything in his power to stop, or at least delay, the outbreak of war in the Far East. He created this illusion by reproducing parts of the records from his two meetings with Mamoru Shigemitsu (1887–1957), the Japanese Ambassador in London from 1938 until he was recalled to Tokyo in June 1941.<sup>83</sup> Reproducing these records gave the chapter an aura of veracity as they reinforced Churchill's assertion that Britain had done everything in its power to avoid conflict with Japan. Indeed, Churchill had attempted to appease the Japanese by closing the Burma Road; this action could have been used by Churchill to illustrate how he and Britain had genuinely done whatever was in their power (in the short-term) to avoid conflict in the Far East. But as this act would have reflected badly on the post-war image that Churchill was building for himself, he referred to it only twice.

Developing this train of thought, Churchill emphasised how it was the British territory in the Far East which had attracted special attention from the Japanese. He highlighted how the German High Command had encouraged Japan to 'strike without delay' at Malaya and Singapore rather than attack America.<sup>84</sup> But Churchill was keen to point out that the Japanese naval and military leaders were 'by no means convinced of this reasoning' and that subsequent discussions amongst the Japanese hierarchy had led to one conclusion:

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<sup>82</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, pp. 156–72. <sup>82</sup> Deakin had overall responsibility but was aided by Geoffrey Hudson (an Oxford specialist on East Asia). The drafts for the historical background to the war in the Far East remained largely unchanged. See Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 229.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 159–60. Churchill was referring to his meetings with Shigemitsu on 24 Feb. and 4 March 1941.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

In their view an operation in South-East Asia was out of the question unless either a prior assault was made on the American bases or a diplomatic settlement reached with the United States.<sup>85</sup>

Churchill was once again highlighting how fundamental America had been to the advent of war in the Far East. Japan had wished to negotiate and reach a settlement *with America*. It was *American* bases that the Japanese had attacked. According to Churchill's account, Britain, her empire in the Far East, and Churchill himself, were peripheral. Churchill made impressive use of German documents which had been captured, and then published, by the Americans. His carefully-edited use of these documents helped him illustrate Japan's uncertainty over which strategy to pursue with America in early to mid-1941: negotiation or attack. The fact that the Japanese strategy revolved around America was the central reason why Churchill used the opportunity to include this material, let alone because it acted as a review of the war from the Axis perspective. America was the key.

Having placed the onus for the outbreak of war on America, Churchill possibly hoped to deflect attention from the lack of regard he had had for the Far East at the time. Churchill's inclination to spend as little time as possible on the Far East was obvious, especially to the syndicate, but even the normally charitable Reynolds observes that Japan had been introduced to the memoirs 'in an abrupt' manner.<sup>86</sup> One reason for this abruptness was simply because the Far East had appeared so infrequently up to this point, so any reasonable attention to it would have appeared incongruous or out of character, especially when compared to how Churchill covered the war in North Africa. There is no reason to suppose that Churchill would have wanted to expose his own weakness in the post-war world, so a short and perfunctory introduction to the Far East would have been one way of skimming over his lack of wartime attention. A more plausible reason, however, was the influence of the Cabinet Secretary, Norman

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 229.

Brook, who wrote that 'too many documents are textually quoted at length' and that he was 'glad to know' that the text would be revised further and documents would be paraphrased instead.<sup>87</sup> Although Brook directed his comments at the whole of the third volume, they were welcomed as they provided an excuse for the 'veil' to fall over Churchill's mind regarding the Far East both during and after the war.

The overall theme of the third volume was 'how the British fought on, with hardship their garment, until Soviet Russia and the United States were drawn into the great conflict'.<sup>88</sup> By the beginning of chapter 31, simply entitled 'Japan', the reader was all too aware that on the horizon was America's official entry into the war—the event Churchill depicted as the defining moment in Britain and America's 'special relationship'. This would be the moment when the fortunes of the war were shared, commiserated with, and then turned around. Churchill had made the reader aware of the growing tension in the Far East, albeit a tension that was primarily between America and Japan.<sup>89</sup> Churchill continued to underplay Britain's role in this escalating drama when he wrote that there 'was no course for us' but to 'leave the United States to try diplomatic means to keep Japan as long as possible quiet in the Pacific'.<sup>90</sup> He reiterated how American diplomatic efforts had been charged with finding a successful settlement with Japan in order to avoid war in the Far East.

Churchill underlined how the few months before Pearl Harbor were solely under the control and jurisdiction of America and Japan. Before emphasising how he had no choice but to sit back and watch America and Japan enter into negotiations to prevent an outbreak of hostilities in the Far East, Churchill quite cleverly inserted three paragraphs from a speech he had given at the Mansion House in London, on 10 November 1941. In this speech, he had claimed that he had always been a 'sentimental well-wisher' as well as an

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<sup>87</sup> CHUR 4/251A/9: Brook to Churchill, 22 Feb. 1949.

<sup>88</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, frontispiece.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 514–36.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 527.

'admirer' of Japan.<sup>91</sup> Ever since he had voted for the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902, Churchill continued, he had always done his 'very best to promote good relations with the Island Empire'.<sup>92</sup> By using an extract from this speech, Churchill was possibly hoping to emphasise how the prevention of war in the Far East was solely down to the ability of America and Japan to 'find ways of preserving peace'.<sup>93</sup> The extract he reproduced in his memoirs highlighted how, in late 1941, Japan was ill-equipped regarding steel production ('the basic foundation of modern war') thereby stressing the economic motives behind Japanese aggression.<sup>94</sup> Using this speech as a springboard, Churchill once again emphasised how the economic and commercial nature of the negotiations between America and Japan reflected what he had said all along—the only reason why Japan had risked war was the economic sanctions which America had imposed.<sup>95</sup>

Churchill emphasised that the British had been concerned with America's economic sanctions when he narrated the events leading up to the signing of the Atlantic Charter.<sup>96</sup> This chapter was going to present the syndicate with problems of interpretation. Emery Reves, Churchill's literary agent since 1937, had bought

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid, Churchill speech, Mansion House, London, 10 Nov. 1941, p. 528. For the full speech see Robert Rhodes James (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches: Volume VI, 1935–1942* (New York: Chelsea House, 1974), pp. 6504–12.

<sup>92</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 528.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 529–30. America introduced economic sanctions against Japan gradually, starting with an embargo on goods for airplane manufacture at the end of 1939. Sanctions against exporting lubricating oil and aviation fuel were introduced in June 1940 and the export of all kinds of scrap metal was prohibited by September 1940. Finally an oil embargo was placed in July 1941. Yet the fact that the Japanese war machine continued to be fed illustrates that economic sanctions were not the sole reason for Japanese imperial aggression.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 'The Atlantic Charter', pp. 385–400.

the rights to market Churchill's memoirs outside Britain and, as an unofficial member of the syndicate, he was often invited to pass comment on draft chapters. As Reves was based in New York, he was naturally more in tune with American rather than British sentiment, and his observations helped Churchill and the syndicate tap into American sensibilities, and to envisage what expectations they had for what the memoirs might reveal. One such occasion was when Reves encouraged Churchill over the chapter on the Atlantic Charter. Reves wrote that the circumstances around its creation would be 'one of the major events on which people will expect you to give all the information'.<sup>97</sup> Since Roosevelt's demeanour (when he and Churchill had parleyed in Placentia Bay) and the 'way in which he manoeuvred the United States into an undeclared naval war in the Atlantic in 1941', had already been focused upon in America, American eyes were going to be fixed on Churchill's narrative.<sup>98</sup> Churchill and the syndicate were aware that this chapter was going to be heavily scrutinized on the other side of the Atlantic. Pownall had commented beforehand, and in an exasperated tone, that the Americans had been 'most inquisitive' about the second volume of memoirs and that they seemed 'to have a complete team of nit-pickers on the job'.<sup>99</sup> Considering that the overall tone of the third volume of memoirs was narrating the climactic point of America's official entry in the war, Churchill needed to present his version of events without affecting his post-war mythologizing of the so-called special relationship or his own post-war persona and ambition.

Churchill was happy to emphasise the magnanimity of Britain and her empire in signing the Atlantic Charter because it suited his post-war purposes. Firstly, it enabled Churchill to accentuate the British Empire's long-held notion of fairness and justice for all. This had a beneficial effect on the post-war view which Churchill forged, as it tied in closely with the post-war change of attitude towards empire. That is to say the empire may no longer have been considered viable, but a Commonwealth of Nations, which was founded upon a shared belief

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<sup>97</sup> CHUR 4/251A/235: Reves to Churchill, undated

<sup>98</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 260.

<sup>99</sup> ISMAY 2/3/135/1: Pownall to Miss M. E. Green (Ismay's Private Secretary), 28 Jan. 1950.



in fairness and cooperation, could be the preferred and eagerly welcomed alternative. Secondly, with regard to the Far East, Churchill's portrayal tried, once again, to deflect attention from British imperial trade concerns in China (which, after all, had been a sticking point with Japan for some time) as he reiterated how British pressure on American economic sanctions had always been undertaken with China's 'security in mind'.<sup>100</sup> By highlighting these aspects of what can be described as a very selective recall of the meetings off the coast of Newfoundland, Churchill was able to portray the wartime and post-war British Empire in a favourable light whilst not taking the focus away from one of his main tenets of the third volume—the solid foundation upon which the Anglo-American relationship had been built.<sup>101</sup> The enthusiasm that Churchill conveyed when recalling the circumstances of the creation of the Charter was erroneous. Reynolds rightly notes that Churchill claimed the first draft of the Atlantic Charter proposal as his own—as 'my text'.<sup>102</sup> But Churchill's portrayal of the reasoning behind the Atlantic Charter enabled him to illustrate how there had been 'no need to argue the broad issues',<sup>103</sup> as both the British and American contingents were content with the resultant 'Anglo-American solidarity'.<sup>104</sup>

Up to this point, the whole volume resembled a slow building crescendo and for Churchill the climactic moment had finally arrived—'Pearl Harbour!'<sup>105</sup> Given Churchill's all too infrequent glances eastwards, why did he devote a significant amount of valuable space to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor? It is even more puzzling when considering how Churchill had been notified of Jay Gold's wish to reduce the word length of the third volume. Kelly relayed to

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<sup>100</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 391.

<sup>101</sup> For a contemporary view of the Atlantic Charter see H.V. Morton, *Atlantic Meeting* (London: Methuen, 1944, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn).

<sup>102</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 260–1. Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, 'The Atlantic Charter', pp. 385–400: in which Churchill refers to the first draft as 'my original draft of the Atlantic Charter' and as 'my text', p. 385.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 389.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 400.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Pearl Harbour!', pp. 537–54. The exclamation mark was used to its full effect.

Churchill how Gold had advised that Book I should be reduced from 128,200 to 93,900 words, and Book II reduced from 128,000 to 92,700 words. A total of 68,300 words were to be cut: the equivalent to one third of the total word count.<sup>106</sup>

Reynolds suggests that it was because Pearl Harbor cast a 'long shadow back' over Churchill's treatment of Asia in 1941.<sup>107</sup> Churchill devoted valuable word space to Pearl Harbor in his narrative because it signified the official American entry into the then truly world-wide war. He wrote that he was grateful for America being dragged into the fray as it meant that 'Hitler's fate was sealed. Mussolini's fate was sealed. As for the Japanese, they would be ground to powder'.<sup>108</sup> This was a powerful image, and it was an image which Churchill nurtured as it suited his post-war rhetoric which was to mythologize the Anglo-American bond which the war had cemented: the bond between the English-speaking peoples. Another less obvious explanation for Churchill's narrative on Pearl Harbor was that the attack had decimated American morale in the Pacific. The success of the Japanese attack had shown Roosevelt that American Pacific strategy was considerably weaker than it was thought to have been. It also illustrated how the Americans, like the British, had underestimated the Japanese. All of which contributed to Churchill's postwar rhetoric: there was nothing which the Anglo-American special relationship could not face head-on. In fact, the shared circumstance which the twisted steel of Pearl Harbor had forged between America and Britain was essential to keeping the peace—especially as the world stumbled from a hot war to a Cold one.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> CHUR 4/251A/154–7: Kelly to Churchill, quoting Gold, undated.

<sup>107</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 229.

<sup>108</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 539.

<sup>109</sup> Churchill made no reference to the long-standing informal arrangement between the United States and British navies (Plan Orange) which was renewed with meaning in January 1938. The plan reasoned that should war in the Pacific break out between Japan and either America or Britain, then America would assure Britain free use of her waters and vice versa. Such a plan had been loosely agreed since the Washington Naval Conference of 1921 as it acted as a bulwark against either Britain or America becoming rivals and prevented them from

It was this shared identity, this common bond, of triumph over adversity which Churchill was to expound upon in his fourth volume of memoirs; but it hinged upon the third volume being successful in cementing the special wartime relationship. Portraying the almighty American eagle as equally vulnerable to Japanese attack as the British Empire in the Far East had been, allowed Churchill to pre-empt the sting which the loss of Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore and Burma would have in his narrative. Perhaps Churchill hoped to show how great the ultimate victory against Japan had been. If America, with all her might, could be temporarily defeated so quickly at the outset of her war what chance did an overstretched and already war-weary British Empire stand? By emphasising American powerlessness in the face of Japanese tactics, Churchill not only crafted a better tale of how defeat was turned into victory, but he could do so without drawing attention to his reluctance to look eastwards until it was too late. Placing the onus for the advent of war with Japan on American diplomacy, skimming over Britain's lack of regard for Japan both diplomatically and imperially, not viewing a potential imperial rival with due care and attention—these tactics enabled Churchill to gloss over his own lack of foresight. The immediate result of the attack on Pearl Harbor was that the 'mastery of the Pacific had passed into Japanese hands, and the strategic balance of the world was for the time being fundamentally changed'.<sup>110</sup> Such fundamental changes to Churchill, the British Empire east of Suez, and America required carefully-chosen words.

The scene setting that Churchill engineered regarding how he first heard of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour remains worthy of partial citation here:

It was a Sunday evening, December 7, 1941.  
Winant [the American Ambassador] and Averell  
Harriman [Roosevelt's personal representative in  
London who was responsible for administering  
Lend-Lease] were alone with me at the table at

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antagonising each other. See Edward S. Miller, *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897–1945* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991).

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 545.

Chequers. I turned on my small wireless set shortly after the nine o'clock news had started. There were a number of items about the fighting on the Russian front and on the British front in Libya, at the end of which some few sentences were spoken regarding an attack by the Japanese on American shipping in Hawaii, and also Japanese attacks on British vessels in the Dutch East Indies. ... I did not personally sustain any direct impression, but Averell said there was something about the Japanese attacking the Americans, and, in spite of being tired and resting, we all sat up.<sup>111</sup>

After Sawyers (Churchill's butler) confirmed that the party of three had heard correctly, and urged by Harriman to seek clarification, Churchill telephoned Roosevelt for confirmation. Churchill continued his reaction to the events in Hawaii:

In two or three minutes Mr. Roosevelt came through. 'Mr. President, what's this about Japan?' 'It's quite true,' he replied. 'They have attacked us at Pearl Harbor. We are all in the same boat now'.<sup>112</sup>

The precision and detail behind the narrative describing how Churchill learned about the attack on Pearl Harbor reveals the depth of importance with which Churchill wanted to imbue the scene. A note entitled 'Chapter XI—Consequences of Pearl Harbor' revealed that the syndicate even checked with the BBC the precise running order of the news bulletin which announced the Japanese attack.<sup>113</sup> The bulletin had started 'with a report of President

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<sup>111</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 537–8.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 538.

<sup>113</sup> CHUR 4/251A/205: Anonymous and undated.

Roosevelt's announcement' about the attack on Pearl Harbor, which was then followed by reports on 'Libya, Russia and RAF attacks on the enemy western front'. The lead item about Pearl Harbor was then read once more. As a result of this attention to detail, it was suggested that Churchill amend the first few lines of the chapter, so he replaced the words 'we listened to the 9 o'clock news', with 'I turned on my small wireless set shortly after the 9 o'clock news bulletin had started'.<sup>114</sup> Such meticulous research revealed the importance which Churchill wanted to attach to this meaningful event.

Churchill's writing perfectly conveyed a scene of calm resignation to the momentous incident at Pearl Harbor. It was however his portrayal of the significance of the Japanese attack for Britain that still manages to sweep the reader up into a frenzy:

No American will think it wrong of me if I proclaim that to have the United States at our side was to me the greatest joy. I could not foretell the course of events. I do not pretend to have measured accurately the martial might of Japan, but now at this very moment I knew the United States was in the war, up to the neck and in to the death. So we had won after all!<sup>115</sup>

Churchill wrote that the 'seventeen months of lonely fighting and nineteen months of my responsibility in dire stress', had witnessed the events of Dunkirk, the fall of France, the necessary (so Churchill claimed) Battle at Mers-el-Kebir, the threat of German invasion, the U-boat war, and the Battle of the Atlantic.<sup>116</sup> With this one Japanese attack, all thoughts of doom were wiped away as he wrote that the American entry into the war meant one thing—'we had won the war'.<sup>117</sup> His emphasis portrayed America's entry into the war as integral to

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 539.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

Britain's survival. Churchill obviously believed that how the details were depicted could endear him to America all over again. After all, a man who had established the special relationship under wartime conditions would obviously be central to keeping this relationship going from strength to strength—or so Churchill doubtless thought. His exactness, relying as it always did upon the precision of the syndicate, was rewarded by the editor of the London office of *Life* magazine, Walter Graebner, who commented that the chapter on Pearl Harbor was 'Magnificent. Same standard as the Bismarck chapter in Book 1'.<sup>118</sup>

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor cannot be examined without reference to the earlier British attack on the Italian fleet on 11 November 1940 at Taranto—'a total and unexpected success'.<sup>119</sup> The spurious link which Churchill made between the two events is still visible in the historiography.<sup>120</sup> With hindsight, it is all too easy to interpret the Battle of Taranto as 'a miniature prototype of Pearl Harbor';<sup>121</sup> and it is surprising how many historians still emphasize how the Japanese paid close attention to the success of the element of surprise as well as the use of torpedo-bombers.<sup>122</sup> Churchill portrayed the

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<sup>118</sup> CHUR 4/251A/159: Graebner to Churchill, 8 Nov. 1949.

<sup>119</sup> Max Arthur (ed.), *Lost Voices of the Royal Navy* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1996; edn, 2005), Lieutenant Michael Torrens-Spence, RN, p. 266.

<sup>120</sup> See Thomas P. Lowry and John W.G. Wellham, *The Attack on Taranto: Blueprint for Pearl Harbor* (Mechanicsburg, USA: Stackpole Books, 1995; edn, 2000); David Wragg, *Swordfish: The Story of the Taranto Raid* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2003; Cassell Military Paperbacks edn, 2004); and 'Battle of Taranto, 1940', <<http://www.royal-navy.mod.uk/history/battles/taranto/index.htm>> accessed 18 June 2011.

<sup>121</sup> Richard Hough, *Former Naval Person: Churchill and the Wars at Sea* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985), p. 167.

<sup>122</sup> See for example: Correlli Barnett, *Engage The Enemy More Closely: The Royal Navy in the Second World War* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991), pp. 244–50; Viscount Andrew Cunningham, *A Sailor's Odyssey* (London: Hutchinson, 1951; repr. 1953), pp. 282–90; Nathan Miller, *War At Sea: A Naval History of World War II* (New York: Scribners, 1995), pp. 120–3; and Mark R.

Japanese as being 'profoundly impressed'<sup>123</sup> with the Fleet Air Arm's successful use of surprise torpedo-bomber attacks, despite the fact that luck had played quite a large part in the success of the operation.<sup>124</sup> As Archibald Sinclair (the leader of the Liberal Party and Secretary of State for Air) commented in an interview six months afterwards, 'well, you know, I think we were a bit lucky at Taranto'.<sup>125</sup> There are two reasons why Churchill made the dubious link between Taranto and Pearl Harbor. First, he did it so that he could emphasise how the British Navy were ahead of the game, in that they saw the benefit of aerial torpedoes in the first place. And secondly, so that Churchill could build up another way in of not only how America officially entered the war but also the extent to which America, much like Britain, would eventually turn initial defeat into ultimate victory. In fact Arthur J. Marder persuasively argued that the link between Taranto and Pearl Harbor was bogus when he wrote that the strategists in the Japanese Imperial Navy 'tended to underplay the successful British naval air attack' as the Italian fleet had been 'sitting-ducks,' and as the naval air arm in Japan was considered to be inexperienced and therefore unlikely to achieve similar success.<sup>126</sup> But, when recalling Taranto, Churchill painted a glorious canvas in which a British naval triumph was recreated by an enemy with

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Peattie, *Sunburst: The Rise of Japanese Naval Air Power, 1909–1941* (London: Chatham, 2001), pp. 129–67.

<sup>123</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 520.

<sup>124</sup> For detailed analysis of the Battle of Taranto see Stephen W. Roskill, *The War At Sea, 1939–1945: Volume I, The Defensive* (London: HMSO, 1954; edn, 2004), pp. 300–1.

<sup>125</sup> Taylor (ed.), *Off the record*, Sinclair to Crozier, 31 Jan. 1941, p. 204.

<sup>126</sup> Arthur J. Marder, *Old Friends, New Enemies: The Royal Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy, Strategic Illusions, 1936–1941* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), p. 314. See also Richard J. Overy, *The Air War: 1939–1945* (London: Europa, 1980), who traces the origins of the strategy involved in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor back to 1936 and Commander Genda Minoru (1904–1989) who 'completed the development of Japanese carrier power by getting the navy to adopt his theory of the mass carrier strike-force', pp. 6–7.

devastating success. Always an Admiralty man, Churchill ensured that the Royal Navy was always leading the way—even unintentionally!

Churchill's proclivity for the Admiralty did not always make for comfortable or satisfying reminiscences. One uncomfortable truth which he had to re-visit was the loss of the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse*.<sup>127</sup> By August 1941, and before entering into formal diplomatic negotiations with the Japanese, Churchill wrote that he had become 'increasingly anxious to confront Japan with the greatest possible display' of British and American naval strength.<sup>128</sup> In an attempt to avert disaster, the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse*, along with four destroyers and the aircraft carrier *Indomitable*, set off for the Far East and let their presence in the Indian Ocean be known to the enemy. In his memoirs, despatching the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse* to the Indian Ocean Churchill deemed to be 'the best possible deterrent', as their presence was meant to force Japan to think of the severe consequences they would face as a result of any act of aggression.<sup>129</sup> But as Pownall later commented, this manoeuvre was 'obviously a failure. It was a bluff that didn't come off'.<sup>130</sup> It was a deception that resulted in both ships being lost. A little over a week after the ships had been sunk, Harold Nicolson\* noted that the 'depressed' public he was meeting in

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<sup>127</sup> Commodore Allen was responsible for the draft chapter on the loss of both ships. See ISMAY: 2/3/123: Ismay to Allen, 3 Dec. 1948, confirming his receipt of the draft from Allen. See ISMAY 2/3/124/1: Ismay to Churchill, 3 Dec. 1948, commenting that he had received the notes on the losses from Allen so that he could 'fill in the action' from Whitehall's perspective.

<sup>128</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 523.

<sup>129</sup> Churchill made no mention of the 'brow beating' he gave Admiral Pound when he insisted that *Prince of Wales* joined the *Repulse*. He made no mention of how *Indomitable* was to join them had 'she not been damaged in a grounding accident in the West Indies': see Eric Grove, *The Royal Navy since 1815* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 196. Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 524–5.

<sup>130</sup> Brian Bond (ed.), *Chief of Staff: The Diaries of Lieutenant General Sir Henry Pownall: Volume II, 1940–1944* (London: Leo Cooper, 1974), undated entry on the 'Causes of Failure', p. 96.



Leicester that day ignored 'the Russian victories, the Libyan advance and the entry of America'. Instead, they were 'faced with the fact that two of our greatest battleships have been sunk within a few minutes by the monkey men, and that we and the Americans have between us lost command of the Pacific'. Nicolson concluded that he would 'try to cheer them up'—he failed.<sup>131</sup>

Churchill's portrayal of the loss of the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse* was not as 'grandiloquent' as his prose on Pearl Harbor had been.<sup>132</sup> His tendency for purple prose was not visible. His use of 'masterful verbs', as well as clipped, short phrases when describing his reaction upon hearing of the losses enforced the solemnity of the situation.<sup>133</sup>

I was opening my boxes on the 10<sup>th</sup> when the telephone at my bedside rang. It was the First Sea Lord. His voice sounded odd. He gave a sort of cough and gulp, and at first I could not hear quite clearly. 'Prime Minister, I have to report to you that the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse* have both been sunk by the Japanese—we think by aircraft. Tom Philips is drowned.' 'Are you sure it's true?' 'There is no doubt at all.' So I put the telephone down. I was thankful to be alone. In all the war I never received a more direct shock. ... As I turned over and twisted in bed the full horror of the news sank in upon me. There were no British or American capital ships in the Indian Ocean or the Pacific except the survivors of Pearl Harbor, who were hastening back to California. Over all this vast

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<sup>131</sup> Nigel Nicolson (ed.), *The Harold Nicolson Diaries, 1907–1963* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004), 19 Dec. 1941, p. 255.

<sup>132</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 264.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

expanse of waters Japan was supreme, and we everywhere were weak and naked.<sup>134</sup>

Japan had become the supreme force in the Far East whilst Britain and America were undoubtedly struggling.<sup>135</sup> The loss of one of his favourites, Admiral Tom Phillips, as well as the loss of life had far deeper reverberations for Churchill, and his beloved British Empire. The moment that the two ships sank to the 'bottom of the sea', it could be argued, was the moment that the vulnerability of the British Empire east of Suez became fully exposed.<sup>136</sup> When describing the actual circumstances which led to the ships being torpedoed, in which 'Chance played so fatal a part', Churchill's narrative extolled the virtues of Tom Phillips.<sup>137</sup> He declared that Phillips was a man of good experience and sound judgement who, whilst expecting some form of air attack from 'shore-based torpedo bombers,' was certainly not expecting long-range aerial torpedo bombers.<sup>138</sup> No one was: the 'efficiency of the Japanese in air warfare was at this time greatly underestimated both by ourselves and by the Americans'.<sup>139</sup>

Churchill usually dictated his memories of key events to a throng of willing secretaries.<sup>140</sup> These dictated reminiscences formed skeleton drafts of what each chapter, book, or volume would contain. Each skeleton would then be farmed out to the relevant syndicate specialist for fleshing out. It was a tried and tested method which worked well for Churchill. One draft contains Churchill's reminiscences on Admiral Phillips and the Japanese use of torpedo bombers.<sup>141</sup> It

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<sup>134</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 551.

<sup>135</sup> 'Rescues from the Prince of Wales and Repulse', detailed that 2330 lives out of a total of 2925 lives were saved, *The Times*, 12 Dec. 1941.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 548.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 551.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> Robert Blake, 'Winston Churchill as Historian', in Wm. Roger Louis (ed.), *Adventures With Britannia: Personalities, Politics and Culture in Britain* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), p. 47.

<sup>141</sup> CHUR 4/253A/133-6: Churchill, dictated reminiscences, c. Jan. 1950.

was obviously intended for inclusion in the third volume of memoirs and the date (noted on the document in Kelly's hand) is January 1950.<sup>142</sup> The third volume of memoirs was published in America on 24 April 1950 and in Britain on 20 July 1950. Only three or four months before the volume was due to be published in America then, Churchill was still dictating his reminiscences of key events. This reveals that the third volume was no different to any other volume, in that it was always a race to finish.<sup>143</sup> But in this instance, it arguably reveals that Churchill was obviously still troubled by the loss of Phillips.<sup>144</sup>

Although not specifically writing about Phillips, Churchill wrote that it was to be understood that 'it is no part of my plan to be needlessly unkind to the men we chose at the time, who no doubt did their best'.<sup>145</sup> Even after nine years, Churchill still felt responsible for the loss of the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse*. According to Allen, Churchill had wanted the ships to 'vanish into the ocean wastes and exercise a vague menace', and Allen remembered precisely what Churchill had called them—'rogue elephants'.<sup>146</sup> Allen had been asked by Churchill to investigate and report on the air conditions in Malaya (the number of operations which were being undertaken in Malaya, Sumatra and Java at the time). Allen's reply disappointed Churchill as he wrote that even though the original report by Air Vice-Marshal Sir Paul Maltby made 'interesting

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<sup>142</sup> CHUR 4/253A/136: Churchill, dictated reminiscences, c. Jan. 1950.

According to Kelly's handwritten note, he distributed copies to the syndicate on 1 February 1950.

<sup>143</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 531.

<sup>144</sup> Kelly recollected how Churchill had once commented that Commodore Allan could not 'bear a single one of his ships going to the bottom without it going into my book'. However as Kelly would point out, in the instance of the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*, this was not the case. See Martin Gilbert, *Never Despair: Winston S. Churchill, 1945–1965: Volume VIII* (London: Heinemann, 1988), p. 345.

<sup>145</sup> ISMAY 2/3/44C: Churchill to Ismay, 23 Apr. 1948.

<sup>146</sup> ISMAY 2/3/124/2: 'The Loss of the PRINCE OF WALES and the REPULSE', notes by Commodore Allen, undated.

reading',<sup>147</sup> there was nothing in the report (a total of 69 pages) which shed any 'further light on the episode of the "Prince of Wales", and "Repulse"'.<sup>148</sup> Reynolds notes that it was on the sinking of these ships that Churchill's mind and heart were engaged despite his political situation, his ill health, and the usual rush to get the volume to the printers.<sup>149</sup> This note from Allen proves this to be so.

Churchill wrote that Admiral Phillips had been a great supporter of 'sending convoys through the Mediterranean and conducting other operations without being deterred by the air risks'.<sup>150</sup> He recalled how it had always been a risk and that some ships had been 'struck or damaged' but 'no ship'—although what Churchill meant was no 'capital' ship—'had been sunk by bombing up to the end of 1941'.<sup>151</sup> Whilst Churchill described Phillips as not being 'unduly afraid of the air', that is to say not being unduly afraid of aerial bombing attacks on ships, he was of course conscious that Phillips was transferring his knowledge of conditions in the Mediterranean onto other waters.<sup>152</sup> But, Churchill recalled, 'the Japanese did not use bombs; they used torpedoes'.<sup>153</sup> Churchill asked why the British did not know that the Japanese had acquired these long-range torpedo bombers, and whether Phillips would have known of their existence.<sup>154</sup> But Churchill seemed almost exasperated when he wrote,

How was it that the Japanese had the very thing that the world had not thought of, something so much more deadly, although by no means novel, something which had not been used, or had been

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<sup>147</sup> CHAR 20/251/43: Allen to Churchill, 31 Jan. 1948.

<sup>148</sup> CHAR 20/251/44: Allen to Churchill, 31 Jan. 1948.

<sup>149</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 253.

<sup>150</sup> CHUR 4/253A/133: Churchill, dictated reminiscences, c. Jan. 1950.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

discarded by all the powers engaged in the European war.<sup>155</sup>

Churchill's questioning continued. In what appears to be a tangential thought which occurred as he dictated his recollections, Churchill declared that 'we must know what information we had, or if it was a complete surprise that the Japanese had these long-range torpedo-armed squadrons'.<sup>156</sup> He also noted how the syndicate were to look at the 'origin of the torpedo seaplane'.<sup>157</sup> But it is the incredulous tone which pervaded Churchill's dictated note which is still so striking. It illustrated not only how much he had underestimated the Japanese, but also just how much he was still an Admiralty man fighting a Victorian-style war. 'How is it', Churchill quizzed, 'that the Japanese were a stride ahead in the whole of this move of naval war?'<sup>158</sup> As Reynolds has noted, Churchill, was 'still living in the battleship era'.<sup>159</sup> Although Churchill was not the only one who was, to some extent, fighting the Second World War using the paradigm of the Great War or even the Boer War, in this instance Phillips 'paid for such complacency with his life and those of eight hundred seamen'.<sup>160</sup>

The idea that Churchill was stuck in a Victorian mindset was evident to at least one member of the syndicate.<sup>161</sup> When reminiscing about his time in the

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<sup>155</sup> CHUR 4/253A/134: Churchill, dictated reminiscences, c. Jan. 1950.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> CHUR 4/253A/135: Churchill, dictated reminiscences, c. Jan. 1950.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 267.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> This belief was also voiced by Air Chief Marshal Sir John Slessor who remarked of Churchill that 'of course, he doesn't really understand modern war' and that Slessor and his colleagues at the Imperial Defence College (Belgrave Square, London), were 'worried about the absence of any airman' in his team of researchers and writers: ISMAY 2/3/105: Slessor to Ismay, 11 Oct. 1948. Ismay replied and confirmed that he and the syndicate had 'pressed' Churchill to 'have an airman on his permanent staff' and that he 'had agreed in principle': ISMAY 2/3/106: Ismay to Slessor, 14 Oct. 1948.

syndicate, Denis Kelly wrote that Churchill had originally intended the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse* 'to dash out, strike and vanish into the milliard archipelagos and inlets of the Indian Ocean'.<sup>162</sup> A manoeuvre that Churchill remarked upon in his memoirs and one which he implied had been the consensus amongst the Admiralty men gathered before him at a late night meeting on 9 December 1941.<sup>163</sup> Kelly went on to note how Churchill had forgotten how easily the British had cornered the *Graf Spee* and that this, along with his lack of geographical knowledge,<sup>164</sup> had led to the ships becoming no more than 'a hostage to fortune' once they had reached Singapore.<sup>165</sup> Churchill wrote that 'Chance' had played a part in the fate of the ships, but he did not allude to the extent of his own role in giving 'Chance' a helping hand. Churchill obviously felt guilty over the loss of the ships—as Kelly noted, Churchill did indeed blame himself 'for sending Tom Phillips and his crews to their death'.<sup>166</sup> Churchill's guilt could account for the short, staccato phrasing and clipped sentence structure which Reynolds noted, and for the highly factual and almost clinically cold manner in which the circumstances surrounding the attack on both ships was written in the memoirs. In his drafted note, Churchill appeared almost desperate to absolve Phillips of any blame. He thought that the Admiralty should be consulted over whether this type of attack had ever happened before as, if not, it would prove to be 'a great defence of Tom Phillips'.<sup>167</sup> Almost a decade after the loss of the ships (and as the publication date for his third volume of memoirs loomed ever closer), Churchill was still reluctant to acknowledge (even in private) that his decision to send the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse* to Singapore and beyond had not been a sound one. Whilst not exactly side-

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<sup>162</sup> DEKE 1: Reader Correspondence: Kelly to Martin Gilbert, 11 Oct. 1988.

<sup>163</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 547.

<sup>164</sup> DEKE 1: Reader Correspondence: Kelly to Martin Gilbert, 11 Oct. 1988.

<sup>165</sup> Arthur Nicholson, *Hostages to Fortune: Winston Churchill and the Loss of the Prince of Wales and Repulse* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2005), Nicholson citing Captain William Davis to Arthur Marder, 3 Apr. 1975, p. 179.

<sup>166</sup> DEKE 1: Reader Correspondence: Kelly to Martin Gilbert, 11 Oct. 1988.

<sup>167</sup> CHUR 4/253A/135: Churchill, dictated reminiscences, c. Jan. 1950.

stepping blame privately, Churchill would do little more than absolve himself of anything but collective blame in his memoirs.

By presenting the long road to Pearl Harbor as he did, Churchill attempted to create a shared identity between the English-speaking peoples—between Britain and America. The defining moment at which the ‘special relationship’ became cemented was certainly mythologised by Churchill, but his historical narrative tended to portray it as providential. America was officially brought into the Second World War and despite the grave disasters which Britain had endured, Churchill wrote that the ‘accession of [the] United States makes amends for all, and with time and patience will give certain victory’.<sup>168</sup> When it came to re-asserting the shared identity in his memoirs, it had to be created all over again. The problem was that creating it over the Far East (when compared to other theatres such as the Atlantic, or the Mediterranean) meant that Churchill had to be interested in the Far East when he clearly was not. In fact, he was only ever interested in the Far East when it ‘affected the struggle for power’.<sup>169</sup> The easiest way in which he could hold onto what had turned out to be a fragile ‘special relationship’ was to forge the shared identity through one of his favourite concepts—turning defeat into victory. In short, Britain and America would be indelibly linked not just by democracy and language but by triumph over adversity.

The areas upon which Churchill had little impact, and the subjects to which he had paid little attention during the war, certainly posed a problem for him when he came to recount them almost a decade later in his memoirs.<sup>170</sup> It was not simply a case of his memoirs mirroring his wartime concerns,<sup>171</sup> it was that his memoirs mirrored the concerns which he believed appeared more relevant to the Cold War world. This explains why Churchill’s portrayal of the advent of war with Japan was so scattered and so scant even after several years had passed. He had not cared about the circumstances or causes behind the long

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<sup>168</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, Churchill to Eden, 12 Dec. 1941, p. 554.

<sup>169</sup> DEKE 5: Churchill lecture given by Kelly, 13 Jan. 1982, p. 22 of lecture notes.

<sup>170</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 253.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

road to Pearl Harbor and he had ignored the British Empire's role in antagonising Japan since the Anglo-Japanese alliance had ended. What Churchill wished to accentuate was the way in which Pearl Harbor had meant that 'England would live; Britain would live; the Commonwealth of Nations and the Empire would live.'<sup>172</sup> However by the end of the 1940s, Churchill had to find a way to turn his lackadaisical approach to the Far East before 1941 into a narrative which did not reflect badly upon either his own personal role, or that of a chastised and punished British Empire.

Jay Gold commented that Churchill should perhaps have thought about 'giving only one chapter to Japan in the whole volume'.<sup>173</sup> To Churchill's credit he agreed with Kelly, who wrote that such a move would be 'undesirable and difficult'.<sup>174</sup> But Churchill, one suspects, did not agree to just a single chapter on Japan in the third volume of memoirs because it would have left him open to criticism over his general lack of attention eastwards. As Pownall in his diary, 'Winston ... didn't believe the Japs would come into the war—not yet at any rate. For once his long range vision was at fault, and badly'.<sup>175</sup> More importantly, if the advent of war with Japan had been introduced to the reader through only a single chapter, it would not have enabled Churchill to achieve his overall aim: to create a shared identity between America and Britain which had been born in wartime but had become of greater importance in the Cold War world. To have only one chapter show the lustrous beginnings of such a bond, as well as how efficient America had been at turning defeat into victory was not enough for Churchill—hence almost three chapters on Japan in the third volume. It was Churchill's post-war desire to reinforce what he mythologized into a solid special relationship (myth making in action), which led him to place the onus for the war in the Far East on America.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 521.

<sup>173</sup> CHUR 4/251A/152: Kelly to Churchill, 27 June 1949.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> Bond (ed.), *Chief of Staff: II*, 20 Dec. 1941, p. 66–7.

<sup>176</sup> CHUR 4/251C/408: Churchill to Kelly, 28 Dec. 1949. Even though Churchill decided on this tactic, he expected a barrage of 'important American corrections



In his speech to the Commons on 16 August 1945, Churchill arguably started to cultivate this myth when he said that justification for the use of the atom bomb at Hiroshima, and then Nagasaki, was due to the 'utterly unprovoked attack made by the Japanese war lords upon the United States and Great Britain'.<sup>177</sup> This is why Churchill portrayed the long road to Pearl Harbor as one in which the American-led economic sanctions, and the failure of American diplomacy both in the long and short-term, had led not only to the Japanese internal political crisis but also to the subsequent quest for imperial expansion.<sup>178</sup> Until Churchill and his government actually fixed their gaze eastwards, too much had already occurred east of Suez. It was, for Churchill, definitely a case of too little, too late. As one historian notes, 'Japan and events in the Far East ... played little part in his thinking and virtually none in his contemporary speaking and writing'.<sup>179</sup> When it came to his memoirs, he had to then recount the 'severe punishment' which the Japanese had inflicted upon the British Empire.<sup>180</sup> His depiction of this punishment was so successful that it is arguably the most used phrase in any history which examines what Churchill famously called the 'worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history'—the 'fall' of Singapore.<sup>181</sup>

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answering points of principle' to flow towards him and the syndicate once the volume was published Stateside.

<sup>177</sup> Hansard, HC (series 5) vol. 413, col. 79 (16 Aug. 1945).

<sup>178</sup> Churchill reiterated his protest that it was the economic embargoes, initially declared by America but then agreed upon by Britain and the Dutch East Indies, which had led to Japan coming into the war. See Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 523 and p. 527.

<sup>179</sup> Robert O'Neil, 'Churchill, Japan, and British Security in the Pacific 1904–1942', in Robert Blake and Wm. Roger Louis (eds), *Churchill: A Major New Assessment of his Life in Peace and War* (Oxford: OUP, 1993), p. 276.

<sup>180</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 552.

<sup>181</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Volume IV, The Hinge of Fate* (London: Cassell, 1951), p. 81.

**Illustration III**



American Isolationism was depicted by the cartoonist Philip Zec as 'The First American Casualty', *Daily Mirror*, c. 15 December 1941.

## **Chapter IV: Churchill's Portrayal of the 'Losses' of Hong Kong, Malaya, and Singapore.**

Singapore has *got* to be held, for to lose it may well mean losing Australia, if not New Zealand. I don't mean losing them to the Japanese, but to the Empire. ... That would lead to quite unpredictable results.<sup>1</sup>

Writing these remarks in his diary five days before Hong Kong surrendered, Sir Henry Pownall (who became one of the syndicate's military consultants) was aware that whilst losing Singapore to the Japanese would be a dire wartime loss, it would have significant and far-reaching consequences for the integrity of the British Empire. Almost a decade later, when Churchill was drafting his memoirs, he was confronted by these 'rude shocks' once again.<sup>2</sup> Churchill had already faced his own profound sense of guilt and sadness when recounting the loss of the *Prince of Wales*, the *Repulse* and of Admiral Tom Phillips, in his memoirs. He had tried to avoid 'the repercussions and the feelings aroused' when editing his memoirs,<sup>3</sup> and he found himself in the same situation when recalling the 'terrible forfeits' which the British Empire in the Far East had endured during the war.<sup>4</sup> So much so, that Pownall was assigned the task of writing the majority of the narrative about the loss of Singapore.<sup>5</sup> After examining Churchill's portrayal

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<sup>1</sup> Brian Bond (ed.), *Chief of Staff: The Diaries of Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Pownall: Volume II* (London: Leo Cooper, 1974), 20 Dec. 1941, p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Volume IV: The Hinge of Fate* (London: Cassell, 1951), p. 81.

<sup>3</sup> CHUR 4/233B/240: Allen to Churchill, 23 Feb. 1949.

<sup>4</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Volume III: The Grand Alliance* (London: Cassell, 1950), p. 540.

<sup>5</sup> CHUR 4/258/23-4: Deakin to Churchill, 'The Fall of Singapore' chapter structure with assignment details, 27 July 1949. Deakin noted that 'some reconstruction' would 'have to be done in the Far Eastern story' and that Pownall would be responsible for four out of the five sections of the chapter.

of the losses of Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore, and Burma, this chapter will illustrate not only what Churchill attempted to hide (his role in the weakening of the British Empire in the Far East) but also how successful he was in shaping 'the story of the British war effort for a generation'<sup>6</sup> so that his personal role was far less visible or obvious.<sup>7</sup>

Hong Kong first appeared in the third volume of Churchill's memoirs, in the chapter on the 'Japanese Envoy'.<sup>8</sup> As previously mentioned, Deakin had suggested that this chapter be inserted into the volume in order to act as a way of chronologically locating the pre-war situation in the Far East within the wider history of the Second World War—especially as Churchill's account had virtually ignored the Far East up to that point. The overall impression which this chapter gave was that Churchill, on behalf of Britain and her empire, had done everything in his power to stop, or at least delay, the outbreak of war in the Far East. Hastily written by Deakin himself, this chapter was part of the entire rush to 'finish the race' to the publishers due to Churchill's health and the Labour government—both of which were failing.<sup>9</sup> Churchill wrote that the volume had to reflect the widening of the war and this, in turn, would mean that not only would the narrative be altered but also it would 'become more general', operational details would be 'cut', and the 'broader issues' would dominate.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly therefore, Churchill willingly prioritized his wish to cement the postwar union of the English-speaking peoples (whilst mythologizing its wartime origins) in favour of any spasmodic wartime eastward glances. This now all-too-familiar occurrence enabled Churchill to ignore how he had commented, in an

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<sup>6</sup> Raymond Callahan, 'Churchill and Singapore', in Brian Farrell and Sandy Hunter (eds), *Sixty Years On: The Fall of Singapore Revisited* (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2002), p. 156.

<sup>7</sup> See Leslie Illingworth's cartoon, 'Fun While It Lasts', on p. 154.

<sup>8</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, 'The Japanese Envoy', pp. 156–72.

<sup>9</sup> David Reynolds, *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), p. 223.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

uncensored moment in 1941, that if the British were to 'do badly' in Europe the 'the Japs will be down on us like a ton of bricks'.<sup>11</sup>

The job of compiling Churchill's reference guide regarding operations in the Far East in December 1941 fell to Pownall. He wrote that the guide would provide Churchill with the 'operational background for the last few chapters of Book 6' but that he had 'kept it entirely factual' as Pownall understood that Churchill would 'not propose to go deeply into these matters until Book 7'.<sup>12</sup> Pownall clinically presented the facts regarding the US troops at Wake Island<sup>13</sup> and the situation in the Philippines.<sup>14</sup> The syndicate often used contemporary situation reports in order to ascertain facts, figures and statistics. The situation report for Hong Kong of December 1941 totalled eleven lines and 101 words—half the amount Pownall used to describe the US troops on Wake Island, and a third of the amount that Pownall used to describe the situation in the Philippines. In these eleven lines of typescript, the available troops at the British garrison 'were far too few to be able to offer effective resistance', and after 'a week of severe fighting the whole garrison was forced to surrender'.<sup>15</sup> It could be argued that Churchill needed more material on the American operations so he could better weave it into his own narrative. Perhaps a lengthy reference to Hong Kong was not needed because Churchill already knew the facts and the tale he would tell about them. This however, is supposition. The fact remains that Hong Kong warranted only eleven lines in Churchill's reference guide which illustrated that Hong Kong, as far as Churchill was concerned, was an ugly sister when compared to the belle of the ball—Singapore.

According to Churchill's portrayal, Hong Kong had been weak and vulnerable for at least a year before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. It was even remarked at the time that 'nobody' pretended that the position of the

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<sup>11</sup> A.J.P. Taylor (ed.), *Off the record: W.P. Crozier, Political interviews, 1933–1943* (London: Hutchinson, 1973), c. before 8 June 1941, p. 225.

<sup>12</sup> CHUR 4/233A/123: Pownall to Churchill, 21 Dec. 1948.

<sup>13</sup> CHUR 4/233A/125: Pownall's notes on Wake Island, c. Dec. 1948.

<sup>14</sup> CHUR 4/233A/126–7: Pownall's notes on the Philippines, c. Dec. 1948.

<sup>15</sup> CHUR 4/233A/128: Pownall's notes on Hong Kong, c. Dec. 1948.

Colony was 'strong'.<sup>16</sup> His narrative implied that the garrison and colony at Hong Kong had been thought of as weak and vulnerable; about which the British Empire, nor the General Staff and War Cabinet, could do little to counter. Churchill wrote that despite the 'several telegrams' he received from the Commander-in-Chief in the Far East which had urged the 'reinforcement' of Hong Kong,<sup>17</sup> he had thought it 'unwise to increase the loss' that Britain would suffer and he wanted to 'avoid frittering away' British resources.<sup>18</sup> In other words, Churchill portrayed Hong Kong as 'untenable'—so much so that the wartime loss of Hong Kong to the Japanese was depicted as one of overwhelming inevitability.<sup>19</sup> As Churchill had remarked in January 1941, 'if Japan goes to war with us there is not the slightest chance of holding Hong Kong or relieving it'.<sup>20</sup> Churchill's portrayal of the situation in the Far East, at least the indefensible nature of the British garrison at Hong Kong, was not unique as he had not been the only MP to hold this view of Hong Kong. As Churchill was beginning to come out of the political wilderness in March 1939, and he was becoming an increasing thorn in the government's side, he wrote a letter to accompany his 'Memorandum on Sea-Power, 1939' which he sent to the Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain.<sup>21</sup> Chamberlain suggested that Lord Chatfield, the First Sea Lord, should read the memo and assess its relevance.<sup>22</sup> In essence, Chatfield agreed with Churchill's observations which centred primarily (at least as far as the Far East was concerned) upon one premise: if a war in the Far East

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<sup>16</sup> Kent Fedorowich, 'Cocked Hats and Swords and Small, Little Garrisons': Britain, Canada and the Fall of Hong Kong, 1941', *MAS*, 37/1 (2003), citing Ian Morrison's 'A Letter from Hong Kong', Aug. 1939, p. 112.

<sup>17</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 157.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Churchill to Ismay, 7 Jan. 1941, in Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 157.

<sup>21</sup> PREM 1/345/6: Churchill to Neville Chamberlain, accompanying letter to the 'Memorandum on Sea-Power, 1939', 27 Mar. 1939.

<sup>22</sup> PREM 1/345/7–14: Churchill, 'Memorandum on Sea-Power, 1939', 25 Mar. 1939.

were to run concurrently with a war in Europe, Britain would have to 'take some risk in the Far East' whilst 'settling the Mediterranean'.<sup>23</sup>

Churchill thus portrayed the overall weakness of the British Empire in the Far East, at least as far as Hong Kong was concerned, in its correct light.<sup>24</sup> After all, Hong Kong's position had been shown to be somewhat precarious since the Japanese had occupied Canton in 1938 and Hong Kong had become surrounded by Japanese held territory. Nonetheless this was still a surprising admission of Churchill's, as such a bleak depiction of the British Empire's lack of assuredness implied that the hold it had on the Far East was not as strong as once portrayed. But as the view that Hong Kong would inevitably be lost to an imperial enemy, if war in Europe ran concurrently, was widely acknowledged at the time, Churchill had little choice but to honestly narrate Hong Kong's strategic precariousness.<sup>25</sup> Churchill hoped that by distracting the reader with such a succinct and pithy admission of Hong Kong's hopeless position, he would be able to also gloss over his own part in its vulnerability.

Churchill's sagacity over the fall of Hong Kong was simply expressed when he wrote that he had harboured 'no illusions about the fate of Hong Kong under the overwhelming impact of Japanese power'.<sup>26</sup> In one sentence he had shown himself to be prescient of the inevitability of Hong Kong whilst reasoning that it had fallen to the Japanese due to their huge numbers and power. He narrated how the 'desperate resistance' of the British troops, whose 'tenacity was

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<sup>23</sup> PREM 1/345/4: Chatfield to Neville Chamberlain, 29 Mar. 1939.

<sup>24</sup> See Kent Fedorowich, 'Decolonization Deferred? The Re-establishment of Colonial Rule in Hong Kong, 1942–45', *JICH*, 28/3 (2000), in which he explores the 'tortuous wartime discussions' between Britain, China and America over Hong Kong's post-war future: 'over the future of this imperial pearl', p. 25. Fedorowich provides further evidence of Churchill's post-war mythologizing of the 'special relationship' as these discussions are not referred to by Churchill within his memoirs.

<sup>25</sup> Whilst the rapidity with which Hong Kong would fall had always been subject to speculation, especially amongst the Chiefs of the Imperial General Staff since the early 1930s, the inevitability of the loss itself had been presumed all along.

<sup>26</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 562.

matched by the fortitude of the British civilian population', meant that the colony had 'fought a good fight'.<sup>27</sup> As in all his glances eastwards, the actual defence and battle for Hong Kong is only briefly mentioned by Churchill.<sup>28</sup> Reynolds suggests that Churchill's lack of attention to India and Burma in his memoirs was possibly explained due to the hollow-sounding nature of anything he could write in the post-war and post-independence era.<sup>29</sup> But this argument does not apply to Hong Kong as it arguably became the prestigious face of the declining British Empire-Commonwealth in the post-war world.<sup>30</sup> Why did Churchill pay such little attention to Hong Kong in his memoirs when he could have portrayed its loss as a prime example of a defeat into a victory (a favourite and recurring theme through the memoirs). What was Churchill attempting to hide?

Churchill's editing of original documents was hurried along so that he not only looked as if he was attempting to hit his deadlines, but also so that he could subtly mould his wartime utterances into what appeared to be benevolent understanding. In the two pages he allocated to the battle and defence of Hong Kong, he included two lengthy extracts of telegrams which he had sent to Sir Mark Young (the Governor of Hong Kong) on 12 and 21 December 1941 respectively. In the 21 December telegram, Churchill was 'greatly concerned' about the landings made by the Japanese.<sup>31</sup> His pragmatic yet tenacious manner was highlighted by including that Whitehall and the War Cabinet could not 'judge from here the conditions' in which they were fighting but that there was to be 'no thought of surrender'.<sup>32</sup> Yet Churchill omitted three sentences from his original telegram:

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 563.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 562–3.

<sup>29</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 336.

<sup>30</sup> Hong Kong was officially restored to China on 30 June 1997 after having been part of the British Empire (and the later Commonwealth) for over 150 years.

<sup>31</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 563.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*



The eyes of the world are upon you. We expect you to resist to the end. The honour of the Empire is in your hands.<sup>33</sup>

These sentences may have been reminiscent of his imperial rhetoric of the 1930s, but they also illustrated the lack of knowledge, foresight and care Churchill had for the situation in Hong Kong. To include these sentences in his memoirs would have been detrimental to the tale he was telling to the post-war world. The 'honour of the Empire' in the Far East would face ruin within four days of Churchill sending this telegram to Young, but this in itself was not solely what Churchill wished to conceal. It was his role in appointing Young in the first place, and the fact that Hong Kong's Governor had surrendered while Churchill was at the helm. But Churchill possibly portrayed Hong Kong's surrender in a succinct manner so he could distance himself from one of his own mistakes, which centred upon the differences between appointing civil or military Governors.

The military authorities questioned the competence of the acting Governor, N.L. Smith (who was providing temporary cover for Hong Kong's Governor, Sir Geoffrey Northcote, who had taken leave following his Doctor's advice). Smith had been appointed acting Governor twice before the likelihood of a Japanese attack on Hong Kong began to escalate in 1940. According to one historian, Smith was 'unfitted to the demands of such an emergency'.<sup>34</sup> Even the Commander-in-Chief of the China station wrote that he and the General Officer Commanding were

in agreement that there is grave danger to ... Hong Kong if the present acting governor remains in office. He lacks decision and drive and things are muddling along. If [the] Colonial Office cannot spare a first class man in [the] very near future, we recommend [that] a Military

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<sup>33</sup> CHAR 20/47/63: Churchill to Sir Mark Young, 21 Dec. 1941.

<sup>34</sup> Norman Miners, *Hong Kong under Imperial Rule, 1912–1941* (Hong Kong: OUP, 1987), p. 144.

Governor be appointed and that a senior soldier should be sent from India.<sup>35</sup>

Churchill accepted Lord Lloyd's advice and approved the War Office's appointment without questioning it.<sup>36</sup> This appointment was made at a time when France had just fallen, when the British Expeditionary Force had been evacuated from Dunkirk, and when the threat of British shores being invaded by German forces was at its zenith. But Churchill's almost casual tacit approval meant that Major-General C.F. Norton took over from Smith until Northcote was due to arrive back in Hong Kong in March 1941. However, Northcote retired in September 1941 and was 'immediately succeeded' by Sir Mark Young, just twelve weeks before the Japanese invasion.<sup>37</sup> This was a dizzying change in the chain of command in Hong Kong, and one which was not helped by the confusion within the colony itself. Churchill's lack of awareness, or even his lack of care, over who would be best positioned in Hong Kong was another instance of too little, too late; as well as one example of a wartime error of judgement which Churchill later wished to gloss over. After all, admitting such errors detracted from the postwar mythologizing which Churchill was intent on nurturing through his manipulation of history.

Another aspect of the battle for Hong Kong which Churchill's all too brief narrative enabled him to sweep aside was the extent to which the Hong Kong garrison was so poorly manned. Already present in the garrison were four regular battalions: two British, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Scots and 1<sup>st</sup> Middlesex; and two Indian, the 5/7<sup>th</sup> Rajput and 2/14<sup>th</sup> Punjab.<sup>38</sup> With the arrival of the 'unlikely

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., Miners citing CO 129/583/19: Commodore, China Station to Admiralty, 24 June 1940, p. 145.

<sup>36</sup> See John Charmley, *Lord Lloyd and the Decline of the British Empire* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), pp. 251–60.

<sup>37</sup> Miners, *Hong Kong under Imperial Rule*, p. 145.

<sup>38</sup> Major-General S. Woodburn Kirby, *The War Against Japan: Volume I, The Loss of Singapore* (Uckfield, East Sussex: Naval & Military Press, 1957; edn, 2004), p. 113.

commitment' of a Canadian contingent battalion<sup>39</sup> (2000 men of the Canadian Royal Rifles and the Winnipeg Grenadiers) in November 1941, having being transferred from their garrison duties in Newfoundland and the West Indies and arriving six weeks before the Japanese attacked,<sup>40</sup> the Hong Kong garrison totalled nearly 12,000 men.<sup>41</sup> In a conversation with Crozier, whilst Churchill was in America, Anthony Eden said that he could not understand why

the soldiers have been wrong about events. Hong Kong, for instance, had held out for two weeks only, whereas all the plans had been made on the assumption that the place would hold out for four months.<sup>42</sup>

Eden's comment suggested that Whitehall was both disappointed and surprised by the short length of time for which Hong Kong had held out. According to the numerous Governors of Hong Kong, the likelihood of a Japanese attack on the colony had steadily increased since 1940. Thinking a Japanese attack might be likely, and knowing how indefensible Hong Kong would be meant the British garrison was kept comparatively light.<sup>43</sup> It was sufficient for local duties, but to expect the garrison to commit to defensive duties was unrealistic, even when swelled by an influx of Canadian troops. And yet, according to Eden, little effort had been made to fight for as long as it had been presumed was possible. This was certainly not the impression that Churchill gave of the fighting itself but the reader suspects that by exalting the battle for Hong Kong in such brief terms (and

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<sup>39</sup> Ashley Jackson, *The British Empire and the Second World War* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), p. 65.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>41</sup> Kirby, *The War Against Japan: 1*, p. 115.

<sup>42</sup> Taylor (ed.), *Off the Record*, Crozier recounting a conversation with Eden, 15 Jan. 1942, p. 267.

<sup>43</sup> Oliver Lindsay, *The Battle for Hong Kong, 1941–1945: Hostage to Fortune* (London: Spellmount, 2005; edn, 2007) especially pp. 47–83. Based on the memories of John E. Harris, this confirms the extent to which the expectations of the Hong Kong garrison were unrealistic from the outbreak of war in Europe.

by singling out a few individuals for specific mention—an old stylistic trick of Churchill's) he was able to distract the reader from the fact that it had been his decision to deliver the Canadian troops there. To admit this strategic error would have contradicted his previous assertion that he had thought it 'unwise to increase the loss' that Britain would suffer there and he wanted to 'avoid frittering away' British resources.<sup>44</sup> Canadian troops had indeed been 'frittered away' and Churchill needed to hide this.

During the First World War, Hong Kong had not been actively involved in hostilities and had 'suffered few hardships apart from commercial dislocation'.<sup>45</sup> After the Great War there was evidence of the deep distrust between the British rulers and the Chinese in Hong Kong.<sup>46</sup> Norman Miners commented that during the early to mid-1930s Hong Kong had turned from a once-prosperous outpost of the British Empire into a troublesome, jaded, and subsequently less financially viable colony.<sup>47</sup> Hong Kong's downward economic turn had obviously been subject to the world-wide effects of the Great Depression, but colonial rule had added to the sense of unease within the colony itself. Hong Kong had come under the so-called protection of the British Empire in 1842 and was thought to be a shining example of 'one of the cardinal principles of British colonial administration' in that it was thought 'imprudent and dangerous to disturb the native inhabitants of the colonies by any attempt to change their traditional social customs and arrangements'.<sup>48</sup> Hong Kong subsequently acquired a symbolism which was of paramount importance to the British Empire in the Far East. Not only was Hong Kong the trade flagship of the British Empire in the Far East (it revealed the extent of the bluff and bluster which was involved in imperial holdings so far away from the mother country's shores), but it also supposedly symbolised how the British Empire's system of

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<sup>44</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 157.

<sup>45</sup> Miners, *Hong Kong under Imperial Rule*, p. 7.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12–24.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

rule was morally better for the local population.<sup>49</sup> By ruling in conjunction with local collaborators, the power structure was, at least in the case of Hong Kong, unobtrusively Chinese. The so-called 'absent mindedness' of the British imperialists fooled no one, as they proved themselves to have been sure of mind from the outset.<sup>50</sup>

Having portrayed Hong Kong as a prime example of the benevolent and non-intrusive nature of the British Empire at its best, Churchill's narrative implied that, despite the colony's status, the British Empire was willing to sacrifice it (albeit temporarily) to the Japanese imperial war machine, in order to hold on to other imperial territories. Churchill capitalised on how the precarious wartime Hong Kong represented the imperialist nightmare of local sacrifice for the greater imperial good. An invaded Hong Kong however, allowed Churchill the poetic license to reinforce his postwar twist on the connection with wartime America. The fact that Hong Kong had been attacked and invaded within hours of Pearl Harbor gave Churchill something else with which to cement the Anglo-American alliance.<sup>51</sup> Churchill barely paid attention to the battle for Hong Kong as it served his purpose to blithely gloss over it and to hide how he had written in March 1939 that, should the Japanese attack, 'they will take Hong Kong and

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<sup>49</sup> See Nadzan Haron, 'Colonial Defence and British Approach to the Problems in Malaya, 1874–1918', *MAS*, 24/2 (1990), for why Churchill's portrayal was so erroneous regarding local populations and how the garrison in Hong Kong was manned. 'In Hong Kong, the Hong Kong regiment was not raised from the local population, but from Sikhs and Pathans.' See p. 279.

<sup>50</sup> Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: OUP, 2004).

<sup>51</sup> See Tony Banham, *Not the Slightest Chance: The Defence of Hong Kong, 1941* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005); John R. Harris, *The Battle for Hong Kong, 1941–1945* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005); and Philip Snow, *The Fall of Hong Kong: Britain, China and the Japanese Occupation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003; edn, 2004), for compelling accounts of the battle for Hong Kong.

Shanghai, and clean us out of all our interests there'.<sup>52</sup> Although Churchill believed that Britain would be able to rectify the situation 'if we are still alive', his lack of regard for Hong Kong was evident.<sup>53</sup> The boundaries and limitations that Churchill set upon the battle for Hong Kong was evident in the official history of the war against Japan, as less than a tenth of the first of five volumes was devoted to the invasion and battle for Hong Kong.<sup>54</sup>

On the day that the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and those 'impudent little yellow men' began 'the real stuff even before they let their declaration be known', they launched a simultaneous attack on Malaya.<sup>55</sup> Seven days later Burma too was being invaded. Churchill cited the Russian entry into the war on the Allied side as one reason why Malaya fell to the Japanese. He claimed that the 'entry of Russia into the war was welcome but not immediately helpful' as the burden fell upon Britain to provide the Russians with the American supplies of which Britain itself had desperate need.<sup>56</sup> Churchill wrote that

in order to make this immense diversion, and to forgo the growing flood of American aid without crippling our campaign in the Western Desert, we had to cramp all preparations which prudence urged for the defence of the Malay peninsula and our Eastern Empire and possessions against the ever-growing menace of Japan.<sup>57</sup>

Despite Churchill not wishing to 'challenge the conclusion which history' would affirm, 'that the Russian resistance broke the power of the German armies and

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<sup>52</sup> PREM 1/345/12: Churchill to Neville Chamberlain, 'Memorandum on Sea Power, March 1939', 25 Mar. 1939.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Kirby, *The War against Japan, Vol. I*, pp. 119–52.

<sup>55</sup> Sandra Koa Wing (ed.), *Mass Observation: Britain in the Second World War* (London: Folio, 2007), Edie Rutherford (39-year-old, housewife, Sheffield), 8 Dec. 1941, p. 115.

<sup>56</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 350.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 351–2.

inflicted mortal injury upon the life-energies of the German nation', he maintained that Britain had regarded the Soviet Union as a 'burden and not as a help'.<sup>58</sup> Two points of interest emerge from this passage. Firstly, Churchill distanced himself from any blame for the inadequate supplies for Malaya as, he claimed, they were needed to bolster Russia's defence. Secondly, by assigning to the Western Desert offensive primacy over any other strategy further eastwards, Churchill revealed his preoccupation with events which would have a direct affect on the Mediterranean theatre.

The chapter which narrated the Japanese advance on Singapore and Malaya was originally entitled 'Shock at Singapore'.<sup>59</sup> However within seven months the title was changed to 'Penalties in Malaya'—as it would appear in the memoirs.<sup>60</sup> A change to the chapter title was suggested by Kelly who thought that reverting to the chapter's original title, 'Retreat in Malaya',<sup>61</sup> was a better idea as it was 'something which does not clash with Chap. 6 'Fall of Singapore''.<sup>62</sup> But this mention of the word 'retreat' was obviously not welcomed. Eventually Churchill plumped for 'Penalties in Malaya', as it implied that whilst such penalties were inevitable, they were merely temporary. Although Kelly, Pownall, and Allen were mainly responsible for this chapter, it was Churchill's love of language, his proven ability to build up anticipation through his florid literary style, which brought about the change in title. After all, the

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 352.

<sup>59</sup> CHUR 4/255A/24: Front piece to chapter proof, 'proofed out' on 5 Jan. 1950. Word count marked by Kelly at 7,100 words.

<sup>60</sup> CHUR 4/255A/73: Front piece to chapter proof, dated 19 Aug. 1950 by Kelly; word count marked by Kelly at 7,600 words. See Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, pp. 32–52.

<sup>61</sup> CHUR 4/255A/128: Front piece to chapter proof, 'proofed out' on 3 Aug. 1949. Chapter title: 'Retreat in Malaya'. A handwritten note states that this chapter had been 'now merged in Fall of S' [fall of Singapore chapter] and a second handwritten note indicated the intention to 'add perhaps further in Burma'.

<sup>62</sup> CHUR 4/255B/153: Front piece to chapter proof, 'proofed out' on 24 Mar. 1950.

1950 reader already knew of the 'worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history' so why spoil the effect?<sup>63</sup> Why dilute the impact of the traumatic picture that Churchill was determined to paint, especially if it meant that he could conceal his own role in Singapore's downfall.

On the front cover of one of the chapter proofs for 'Penalties in Malaya' there are several notes in Churchill's writing.<sup>64</sup> The sub-headings for the chapter suggest that he clearly wanted to emphasize three points. The first was Wavell's pivotal role in the retreat to the naval base on the island and how Wavell was 'pessimistic'.<sup>65</sup> Churchill's depiction of Wavell remained unaltered in the published chapter. The second noticeable emphasis was revealed by the way in which two sub-headings were crossed out. The first sub-heading deleted on this proof was entitled 'Naval Failure to Protect the West Side of the Peninsula'.<sup>66</sup> In the published edition, this sub-heading was replaced with 'My Complaint of the West Coast Naval Defence'.<sup>67</sup> A chapter front page proof therefore contains evidence that Churchill was already subtly twisting his portrayal of his role in the events leading up to the surrender of Singapore. The second sub-heading which Churchill scrubbed out was that which read 'Question of Evacuating Singapore Garrison to Burma'. This sub-heading did not appear in the published version, nor did any watered-down version of it appear anywhere in print. To have included it would have implied that the garrison could possibly have been evacuated to Burma which, in turn, would have meant that these troops could have been deployed elsewhere and fewer British troops would therefore have surrendered to the Japanese. Sacrificing British imperial territory was one thing, but to be seen to have sacrificed the troops themselves would have damaged Churchill's reputation.

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<sup>63</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 81.

<sup>64</sup> CHUR 4/255A/73: Front piece to chapter proof, dated 19 Aug. 1950 by Kelly; word count marked by Kelly at 7,600 words.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 32.



The third and final emphasis on this front piece is how Churchill inserted a sub-heading: 'Emphasis on the Keeping Open of the Burma Road'.<sup>68</sup> This sub-heading appeared in the published version as it allowed Churchill to divert attention away from the far-reaching consequences to the British Empire that Pownall had hinted in his diary five days before Hong Kong surrendered. It also enabled Churchill to accentuate the way in which he had followed the American preference for keeping links with Chiang Kai-Shek open. Saving British imperial 'face' was of paramount importance to Churchill in the post-war world. His imperialism was confronted with Attlee's watering down of the empire into a Commonwealth, and he was hoping to work closely again with America. Churchill appeared to believe that if he narrated how he had given preference to American wartime strategy in the Far East, at the cost of the British Empire, this would hold him in good stead. One consequence of Churchill's personal motivation behind his portrayal was that his narrative influenced subsequent official histories, as Hong Kong and Malaya were deemed to be inevitable inconveniences and mere side-shows to the main event—the fall of Singapore.<sup>69</sup> It was Churchill's portrayal of this 'fortress of character' that entranced the historical psyche and became truly mythologized.<sup>70</sup> And all because he misdirected the reader away from his part in its downfall.

It was sometime between the summer of 1949 and April 1950, that a reluctant Churchill finally recorded his thoughts about the 'fall' of Singapore.<sup>71</sup> By mid-1950 the fourth volume of Churchill's memoirs had already gone through several proofing stages as both the American and British publication

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<sup>68</sup> CHUR 4/255A/73: Front piece to chapter proof, dated 19 Aug. 1950 by Kelly; word count marked by Kelly at 7,600 words.

<sup>69</sup> Major-General Stephen Woodburn Kirby, *The War against Japan: Volumes I–V* (London: HMSO, 1957–69; Uckfield: Naval & Military Press edn, 2004).

<sup>70</sup> PREM 1/345/9: Churchill to Neville Chamberlain, 'Memorandum on Sea Power, March 1939', 25 Mar. 1939.

<sup>71</sup> Reynolds believes CHUR 4/255A/118 to date from the summer of 1949, see *In Command of History*, p. 295–6. However, a discussion with the Director of the Churchill Archives indicated that the document could date from as late as April 1950. See Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 81.

deadlines loomed.<sup>72</sup> The fact that Churchill, at so late a stage in the editorial process, was still reluctant to record his thoughts about Singapore indicated that, although almost a decade had passed, he was still affected by episodes that continued to nag 'at his conscience'.<sup>73</sup> But the loss of Singapore is a prime example of Churchill wanting to hide his own cumulative responsibility for the 'worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history',<sup>74</sup> as he omitted how, as Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1924 to 1929, he significantly reduced government spending on the base in its crucial developmental stages.<sup>75</sup> As Reynolds noted, whilst Churchill 'hammered away at the naval estimates' he was also determined to slash the budget for the base at Singapore.<sup>76</sup>

There is not room in this thesis to delve into the fascinating offensive and defensive manoeuvres made by the Japanese and the British troops. Nor is there a need, as these matters have since been discussed and debated at great length.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> The British publication date was set for 3 August 1951 for the *Hinge of Fate* whereas the American publication date was earlier, 27 Nov. 1950. See Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 531.

<sup>73</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 227.

<sup>74</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 81.

<sup>75</sup> See Ian Hamill, 'Winston Churchill and the Singapore Naval Base, 1924–1929', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 11/2 (1980), pp. 277–86; George Peden, 'The Treasury and defence of empire', in Greg Kennedy (ed.), *Imperial Defence: The old world order, 1856–1956* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 71–90; and James Neidpath, *The Singapore Naval Base and the Defence of Britain's Eastern Empire, 1919–1941* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), pp. 102–21 for the period which covered Churchill's time at the Exchequer, and pp. 122–51, for the development and effects which occurred during the 1930s.

<sup>76</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 104.

<sup>77</sup> Louis Allen, *Singapore, 1941–1942* (London: Davis Poynter, 1977); Noel Barber, *Sinister Twilight: The Fall of Singapore* (London: Collins, 1968); Geoffrey Brooke, *Singapore's Dunkirk: The Aftermath of the Fall* (London: Leo Cooper, 1989); Raymond Callahan, *The Worst Disaster: The Fall of Singapore* (Newark, USA: University of Delaware Press, 1977); and 'The Illusion of Security: Singapore 1919–1942', *JCH*, 9/2 (1979), pp. 69–92; Stanley L. Falk,

With every major anniversary of the fall of Singapore, further publications jostle for room on already crowded bookshelves.<sup>78</sup> Churchill's (or rather Pownall's) historical narrative was indeed quite accurate as it acknowledged the lack of planning (regarding the placement of the guns), the lack of cover from what was deemed to be the most unlikely landward attack, the supposed impenetrable nature of the jungle, and the ill-timed blowing of the causeways—to name but a few strategic and logistical sticking points.<sup>79</sup> By concentrating on the minutiae of the battle for Singapore, for example by going into great detail about the ill-timed destruction of a causeway, Churchill was trying to divert the reader's attention away from the pivotal role he played in the actual pregnability of the fortress itself. By emphasising the catastrophic nature of the surrender, Churchill was hoping to divert attention from the manner in which the surrender symbolized the

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*Seventy Days to Singapore: The Malayan Campaign, 1941–1942* (London: Robert Hale Publishers, 1975); Brian Farrell and Sandy Hunter (eds), *Sixty Years On: The Fall of Singapore* (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2002); Karl Hack and Karl Blackburn, *Did Singapore have to Fall? Churchill and the Impregnable Fortress* (London: Routledge, 2003); Richard Holmes and Anthony Kemp, *The Bitter End: The Fall of Singapore, 1941–1942* (Chichester: Anthony Bird Publications, 1982); Colin Smith, *Singapore Burning: Heroism and Surrender in World War II* (London: Viking, 2005; Penguin, edn, 2006); Peter Thompson, *The Battle for Singapore: The True Story of the Greatest Catastrophe of World War II* (London: Portrait, 2005); and Alan Warren, *Britain's Greatest Defeat: Singapore 1942* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2002; edn, 2007).

<sup>78</sup> Chris Brown, *Battle Story: Singapore 1942* (Stroud: History Press, 2012). Due to be published late 2012.

<sup>79</sup> The furore over the guns and which way they pointed (landward or seaward, fixed or movable) is constantly referred to. As James Neidpath rightly points out, by the time Churchill's fourth volume of memoirs was published, 'the notion that the guns were pointing in the wrong direction had already been effectively propagated'. Yet as Singapore was part of his imperial phoenix rising from the ashes image, Churchill did nothing to dispel this myth. Infact, he added to it. See James Neidpath, *The Singapore Naval Base and the Defence of Britain's Eastern Empire, 1919–1941* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), p. 223.

overall weakness of the British Empire in the Far East—not just in wartime and against the Japanese, but also during the interwar period.<sup>80</sup> Finally, Churchill wished to avoid the criticism that his ill-informed perception of Singapore, as an ‘impregnable fortress’,<sup>81</sup> had in fact been his ‘cardinal mistake’.<sup>82</sup>

Churchill distanced himself from the loss of Singapore, not only in the short term (by blaming Percival and Wavell rather than himself and the Chiefs of Staff back in London) but also in the long term. At the very beginning of his fourth volume, which contains the chapter on the fall of Singapore,<sup>83</sup> the reader is confronted with the ‘Australian Anxieties’ over the looming Japanese threat.<sup>84</sup> By giving short shrift to John Curtin (1885–1945), the Australian Prime Minister, and by quoting from the telegrams which they exchanged, Churchill took great pains to show that he had not been responsible during the 1930s for ignoring the

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<sup>80</sup> See Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Travelling Between the Wars* (New York: OUP, 1980; Oxford: edn, 1982), who highlights how government interference in travelogues of the 1930s helped to create Singapore’s sense of impregnability. Fussell quotes the journalist Mona Gardner who arrived in Singapore in 1939 and who emphasized ‘Singapore’s utter invulnerability to land attack from the Malayan Peninsula’. Fussell concludes that Gardner was in fact creating ‘specious propaganda’ which did nothing but increase the ‘shock’ of the fall of the ‘impregnable fortress’, p. 224–5. This also shows the extent to which the British Empire indulged in imperial bluff and bluster—at times to its own detriment. British imperial security in the Far East was little more than an illusion. See also Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Armies: Britain’s Asian Empire and the War with Japan* (London: Allen Lane, 2004; Penguin, edn, 2005), chapter 2, ‘A Very British Disaster’, which examines the nature and extent of the illusion surrounding the ‘fortress that never was’, pp. 106–55.

<sup>81</sup> Kirby, *The War against Japan, Vol. I*, p. 471.

<sup>82</sup> Victoria Schofield, *Wavell: Soldier and Statesman* (London: John Murray, 2006), citing Wavell, p. 219.

<sup>83</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, pp. 81–94.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 3–17.

warnings from the Dominions about the potential Japanese threat.<sup>85</sup> Churchill deftly attempted to remove himself from the debate about the conception, and subsequent building, of the Singapore naval base by writing that he had not been in a position to influence any governmental decisions about the base for a period of eleven years before he became Prime Minister.<sup>86</sup> By distancing himself from any responsibility for how the Singapore base had been financed, staffed and supplied in the decade before he became Prime Minister, Churchill was attempting to answer Curtin's criticism—that Australia had made Britain aware in 1933 that in the event of a Japanese attack, unless a naval presence was permanently installed at Singapore, the 'fortress' would crumble away. When Curtin had requested that the 7<sup>th</sup> Australian Division not go to Rangoon and be diverted back to Australian shores, Pownall had predicted in his diary that 'Winston has certainly got a big stick to beat the Australians with now, and he'll do it'.<sup>87</sup>

Churchill's very deliberate ordering of documents enabled him to distance himself from the causes of the 'Australian anxieties' throughout the fourth volume's first book—entitled 'The Onslaught of Japan'.<sup>88</sup> Although he was not denying a shared responsibility, Churchill was setting the scene so he could avoid sole responsibility for the loss of Singapore—for what Pownall described as 'these evil happenings'.<sup>89</sup> Churchill was careful not to offend those whom he hoped to have as contemporary world leaders should he return to Downing Street. In one dictated draft he wrote that the Secret Sessions speeches would prove useful regarding the Australian warnings of the weaknesses at

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<sup>85</sup> Churchill could have pointed out that the Dominion's anxiety over the way in which the Far East was reinforced and staffed had been a matter for concern for almost twenty years. But this would have included his time as Colonial Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer which explains why he did not mention the long period of anxiety intermittently expressed by Australia and, to some extent, New Zealand.

<sup>86</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, Churchill to Curtin, 19 Jan. 1942, p. 13.

<sup>87</sup> Bond (ed.), *Chief of Staff: II*, 25 Feb. 1942, p. 91.

<sup>88</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, pp. 3–367.

<sup>89</sup> CHUR 4/255A/110: Pownall to Churchill, 26 May 1949.

Singapore, but they would have to be used carefully as 'one must avoid all squabbles with the Australians and their beastly general (Bennett) about it'.<sup>90</sup> Within, and around, his correspondence with Curtin, Churchill carefully placed the blame for the inadequate Australian protection of their own shores on party disunity within the Australian government.<sup>91</sup>

Churchill wrote how he had pressed for an inquiry as to how Singapore could have fallen into Japanese hands but 'we could not spare the men, the time, or the energy'.<sup>92</sup> Logistically, and practically, this may have been true in 1942 but it is more likely to have taken on a more euphemistic and concealed nature in the postwar years. An enquiry into why the fortress had fallen would doubtlessly have had to include Churchill's own responsibility for the weakening of the defences at Singapore during the 1920s when he was Baldwin's Chancellor. An inquiry would have highlighted how Churchill had not heeded Percival's warning about the likelihood of Japan invading Malaya. It would also have highlighted Churchill's (and Whitehall's) continued insistence that this was just not going to happen—after all, as Churchill wrote, Japan would not consider conquering Singapore as 'it is as far from Japan as Southampton from New York'.<sup>93</sup> And finally, an inquiry would have reflected poorly on the British Empire as it would have highlighted the sheer folly of a naval base which did not have an adequate fleet and few modern planes to protect and accompany it. As it was, there 'were no modern aircraft in Malaya when the Japanese invaded on 8 December 1941' and, as the RAF's most northern airfield at Kota Bharu was 'abandoned the next

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<sup>90</sup> CHUR 4/258/68: Churchill dictated draft on Singapore, undated, c. summer 1949–April 1950. See also, Lieutenant-General H. Gordon Bennett, *Why Singapore Fell* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1944), in which Bennett concluded that the loss of Singapore was due to insufficient troops (both in number and quality), the 'complete absence of prepared defences', 'poor leadership' and the 'contributing factor' of the lack of sea and air power. Factors about which Churchill shared partial responsibility. See pp. 220–9.

<sup>91</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 4–13.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>93</sup> PREM 1/345/10: 'Memorandum on Sea-Power, 1939', Churchill to Neville Chamberlain, 25 Mar. 1939

day', there was no hope of protecting Singapore.<sup>94</sup> If an inquiry into Singapore had taken place in the aftermath of the war it may well have concluded all of the above. It may also have concluded that the 'imperial disasters of 1941–42 had been obscured' as there had been 'no imperial Dunkirk moment, or imperial Blitz, no surge of imperial unity'.<sup>95</sup> And if the question as to why Singapore's importance had been obscured it may well have been answered by citing how little attention had been paid to it before, during and after the war. Churchill's misplaced belief in Singapore's unassailability, the way in which 'when the war came in 1939 there were no resources to plug the holes' that had been found in the defences,<sup>96</sup> Churchill's (and Whitehall's) failure to listen to Percival's warning, and his own role in the paucity of the budget for four years of Singapore's early life meant that, by 15 February 1942, Singapore was lost to Japan and the prestige of the British Empire suffered a huge and devastating blow.

A Dardanelles-style inquiry, either during the war or in its immediate aftermath, could have placed some of the blame for Singapore at Churchill's feet and this could have proved detrimental to his attempt to be elected as Prime Minister in 1950 to 1951. In a dictated draft of his reminiscences on Singapore, Churchill even went so far as to write that he 'did not intend to pass judgement on the behaviour of generals or troops at Singapore. Forgive us our trespasses'.<sup>97</sup> Here, Churchill attempted to lay the blame for the fall of Singapore as far away from himself as possible, and he wanted to avoid at all costs a situation in which his own judgement was called into question. In a conversation with Crozier in May 1942, Churchill said that he was not in favour of an enquiry 'into all that led up to the Singapore disaster' as he could not possibly spend anyone's 'energies at

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<sup>94</sup> Max Arthur, *Lost Voices of the Royal Air Force* (London: Hodder, 1993; edn, 2005), p. 342.

<sup>95</sup> David Edgerton, *Britain's War Machine: Weapons, Resources and Experts in the Second World War* (London: Allen Lane, 2011), p. 85.

<sup>96</sup> Sir Philip Joubert de la Ferte, *Fun and Games* (London: Hutchinson, 1964), p. 107.

<sup>97</sup> CHUR 4/255A/118: Churchill dictated draft on Singapore, undated, c. July 1949–April 1950.

this moment on enquiring into all that led up to it, and anyway I have got enough on to do without it'.<sup>98</sup> Turning the tables on Crozier, Churchill asked him what he thought would be gained by holding an enquiry: 'What good is the country going to get out of it?'<sup>99</sup> When Crozier reminded him that an enquiry had been held over the Dardanelles, Churchill 'spoke with an air of humorous understatement' and said that,

Who or what gained by that Commission? I did, and I alone. Before it reported I could not get a place in the Government at all, but *after* it had reported and exonerated me, I went back into the Government. *I* gained but no one else!<sup>100</sup>

When Churchill was drafting his reminiscences of the fall of Singapore in 1949–50, the cock-sure confidence he had exhibited in front of Crozier had definitely waned. No report, no Dardanelles-style enquiry, meant there would be no outright apportioning of blame which was obviously convenient for Churchill, as well as for Attlee's already strained Labour Government, yet Churchill still side-stepped Singapore as much as he could as he was all too aware of his own 'trespasses'. As he wrote, possibly warning the syndicate and Pownall in particular, although it had been his plan to have an enquiry, he was 'not going to go into details at all on this subject'.<sup>101</sup>

The first way in which Churchill could avoid being confronted over Singapore was by allowing Pownall free rein over the chapter. When Pownall began to collect material for the chapter on the fall of Singapore, he wrote to Churchill and informed him that, as Percival's despatches on Singapore had been published at the time, 'there was a good summary of it in *The Times*'<sup>102</sup> which

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<sup>98</sup> Taylor (ed.), *Off the Record*, Churchill to Crozier, 29 May 1942, p. 332.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> CHUR 4/255A/118: Churchill dictated draft on Singapore, undated, c. Summer 1949–April 1950.

<sup>102</sup> CHUR 4/255A/99: Pownall to Churchill, 24 Dec. 1948.



Churchill would possibly find 'convenient for reference'.<sup>103</sup> This presented Churchill with a problem: how would he portray the fall of Singapore to a readership which already knew the circumstances of its fall without drawing attention to his own role in the disaster? Churchill eased this direct responsibility by having Pownall write the chapter. In fact, the first name to appear in the acknowledgements to volume four was Pownall's,<sup>104</sup> and Churchill made a rare accreditation within the text itself when he wrote that Pownall had 'set forth in full the policy followed in the years before the war about the Singapore fortress' and that Pownall's memorandum, which had been written in 1949, was 'a balanced account'.<sup>105</sup>

On the question of whether the defences of Singapore island's north shore had been adequate or not, Pownall wrote that he had tried to be as objective as possible and that he had attempted to present Churchill with 'reasons rather than excuses'.<sup>106</sup> Pownall's brief paper, the 'Defence Works of Singapore' was duly sent to Churchill.<sup>107</sup> The final paragraph of Pownall's report is worth quoting in full as it illustrates perfectly how Singapore was neglected as, in reality, it was nothing more than imperial bluff and bluster.

Percival has pointed out, and with truth, that the Malayan defence scheme was reviewed by the War Office and the Committee of Imperial Defence. If there was lack of foresight the Commanders on the spot were not the only ones to blame. In this I do not exclude myself, as I was in the War Office in 1938/39 and again in 1941. I do not recall that defences on the North Shore were ever mooted whilst I was there. In those years there were so many

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid; and CHUR 4/255A/100: 'The Fall of Singapore', *The Times*, 16 Feb. 1942 ; and CHUR 4/255A/101: 'Potential Significance of Singapore: British Bluff Called', *The Times*, 27 Feb. 1942.

<sup>104</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. viii.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>106</sup> CHUR 4/258/26: Pownall to Churchill, 30 Dec. 1948.

<sup>107</sup> CHUR 4/258/27-31: Pownall, 'Defence Works of Singapore', 30 Dec. 1948.

more urgent and dangerous problems nearer home that Singapore did not, I fear, get a high priority in our thoughts or on our working time.<sup>108</sup>

There was undoubtedly a lack of preparedness for war in the Far East which was attributable to not only Churchill's mistaken long-range view but also to strategic factors. For example, there were no trained Photographic Interpreters (PIs) in Singapore and 'it was only when the Buffalo and Blenheim prints started to come in that the Air Ministry decided to form a Far East Interpretation Unit at Seletar'.<sup>109</sup> The first PIs left Britain in February 1942 but it was too little too late—in two weeks Singapore surrendered.

Despite such strategic shortcomings, Pownall did not give excuses but reasons as to why it had been so and he displayed a brutal honesty in his chapter on the fall of Singapore. His honesty can be attributed to his expert knowledge of the Far East but a discernable sense of relief can also be seen in his account. After all, as Churchill pointed out, it had to be remembered that had Pownall not become Wavell's Chief of Staff he would have 'been called upon to bear the terrible load which fell upon the shoulders of General Percival'.<sup>110</sup> When he later became Mountbatten's Chief of Staff, Pownall wrote that:

I had no option but to take it on. ... What I did NOT want to do was to have anything connected with the war in Asia! ... I have never liked the look of the anti-Jap campaign to be carried out on their very strong western defensive flank. ... This last four years has been for me a game of Snakes and Ladders anyway. I gather the P.M. warmly seconded the idea of my appointment—he seems quite reasonably disposed towards me provided I am not near *him*!<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> CHUR 4/258/29–30: Pownall, 'Defence Works of Singapore', 30 Dec. 1948.

<sup>109</sup> Andrew J. Brookes, *Photo Reconnaissance* (London: Ian Allen, 1975), p. 155.

<sup>110</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 82.

<sup>111</sup> Bond (ed.), *Chief of Staff: Vol. II*, 14 Sept. 1943, p. 108.

Despite Pownall's feelings towards the Far East and the way in which the war against Japan had been prosecuted, he managed to attain some distance from his wartime feelings even though he was an integral member of the syndicate. He and Ismay frequently wrote to each other as members of the syndicate and whilst it is doubtful that Pownall would have shown his diary entries to Churchill personally, perhaps Ismay did not reveal his pronouncements at the time to Churchill either. Dismayed by the fall of Singapore, Ismay wrote that it had been 'good to learn that some of the troops at any rate put up a desperate fight' which suggested that perhaps Percival's men and the troops who surrendered at Singapore were indeed much-maligned by their own side.<sup>112</sup> Pownall wrote to Churchill extolling the virtues of Percival's despatch on Malaya.<sup>113</sup> He wrote that the despatch was 'very comprehensive, much more so than an ordinary despatch' as Percival had surveyed 'the various changes in defence policy before the war' and included 'considerable detail' on the operations in Malaya themselves.<sup>114</sup> Pownall commented that Percival had attributed the 'lack of defence works on the landward side of Singapore Island' to a 'shortage of funds (from Home) before December 1941' and a 'shortage of labour after that date'.<sup>115</sup> Pownall reassured Churchill that whilst Percival had been 'quite entitled to say all he has said', Percival's tone had in fact been 'moderate' and he had 'dealt lightly with the Australians'.<sup>116</sup> Intrigued by Pownall's interpretation of Percival's despatch, a concerned and curious Churchill scribbled a brief note to Pownall: 'Gen. P., Please speak to me about this'.<sup>117</sup>

In another letter to Churchill, Pownall wrote that he had thought it 'important to bring out that the whole problem of Malayan defence in 1941 had

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<sup>112</sup> ISMAY 4/18/11: Ismay to Harry Hopkins, 17 May 1942.

<sup>113</sup> CHUR 4/255A/102: Pownall to Churchill, undated, but annotated note in Churchill's hand is dated 1 Jan. 1950.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

been cast into the melting pot by the events of the previous two years'.<sup>118</sup> If Churchill did not explain this to his readers then the 'disaster to our arms will remain a puzzle',<sup>119</sup> which implied (although Pownall did not write this) that it would decidedly harm Churchill's prospects of getting back into Downing Street. Pownall wrote that he had 'not tried to embellish the language' which had been used in the reports on the 'operations in Malaya and Singapore Island in January and February 1942',<sup>120</sup> and maintained that these notes were for Churchill's use as reference material only, which explained why Pownall had not given a commentary. Pownall had merely presented Churchill with references in note form so that Churchill could explain 'if only in part, how these evil happenings came to pass'.<sup>121</sup>

Churchill's dictated draft on Singapore is surprisingly blunt and honest especially when it is placed against his overwhelming desire (especially in 1950) to oust Attlee's Labour government and romp back to Downing Street during peacetime.<sup>122</sup> Churchill wrote that:

it must be admitted I did not attempt to turn my mind on to the situation until after the Japanese had declared war and the Americans were our Allies. Then I did, and it was too late, but even if it had not been too late, it would have been right not to do it.<sup>123</sup>

His prophetic ability, one of the myths he had built up over the first three volumes of memoirs, was deeply shaken by this admission; but even more surprising was his blatant and continuing disregard for the Allied troops left

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<sup>118</sup> CHUR 4/255A/103: Pownall to Churchill, undated.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> CHUR 4/255A/110: Pownall to Churchill, 26 May 1949.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> CHUR 4/255A/118-24: Churchill dictated draft on Singapore, undated, c. summer 1949–April 1950.

<sup>123</sup> CHUR 4/255A/118: Churchill dictated draft on Singapore, undated, c. summer 1949–April 1950.

behind in Singapore at the time of surrender. This is evident in the note, as Churchill had crossed out the sentence which read 'but even if it had not been too late, it would have been right not to do it' and replaced them with five words: 'The major dispositions were right'.<sup>124</sup> The only major dispositions on Churchill's mind at the time were defining and refining a combined Anglo-American policy for the defeat of Japan and protecting the heart of the British Empire—India. Churchill's lack of regard for the Far East equated with its willing sacrifice. Sacrificing Hong Kong, Malaya and Singapore were necessary evils so long as Burma could still act as a geographical protector to India.

The publication of the Secret Wartime Sessions had caused a furore in Australia in 1946. The resulting international enmity felt between the motherland and Australia had only just begun to settle when Pownall was beginning to write the chapter on Singapore. The neutrality of the chapter was essential to how Churchill's wartime self would be depicted in a post-war world—a world in which Churchill thought he could still serve King and, if not Empire, at least Commonwealth. By stirring the reader's sense of defeat and humiliation Churchill actually exaggerated the emotional memory of the fall of Singapore. Some did feel distressed at the suffering brought about by the greatest defeat and humiliation at the time, but in reality the fall of Singapore was not a subject which emotionally crippled the general public in Britain. The Mass Observation archive entries, between February and March 1942, suggest that whilst the fall of Singapore was noted with some regret, it was not uppermost in British people's thoughts. They were more concerned with the two German battleships, the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, and the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen* making a clear run for it through the English Channel. As one of Mass Observation's correspondents wrote,

I had been expecting the fall of Singapore. I'm feeling very hopeless about the war situation. The Far East is bad

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

enough but when you hear the English Channel is a clear passage to three German battleships ... well!<sup>125</sup>

Although Churchill announced the fall of Singapore on the BBC at 9 pm on 15 February 1942 it was presented as only a small part of the whole world war.<sup>126</sup> According to one contemporary, Churchill 'spoke for about 35 minutes and, as usual, spoke well' but his appeal for loyalty and calm was 'uncalled for' and could have been 'misinterpreted as an appeal to stick to him'.<sup>127</sup> The nervousness of the general public did not go unnoticed by one politician, the ubiquitous diarist Harold Nicolson, who wrote that Churchill's 'broadcast last night was not liked. The country is too nervous and irritable to be fobbed off with fine phrases'.<sup>128</sup> Churchill may have admitted in his skeletal dictated notes that he had not paid enough attention to Japan, or indeed to the Far East as a whole, but this was no different to how he had been in 1942. Churchill felt the need to impose a new and reasonably false heightened reaction to the 'worst disaster and

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<sup>125</sup> Kao Wing (ed.), *Mass Observation*, Henry Novy (conscript who became a paid investigator for MO and one of the first trustees appointed at the MO archive in the 1970s), 15 Feb. 1942, p. 126.

<sup>126</sup> Jock Colville noted how he had been on duty in Pretoria when he heard Churchill's announcement on the radio of the fall of Singapore. Colville wrote how the 'nature of his words, and the unaccustomed speed and emotion with which he spoke, convinced me that he was sorely pressed by critics and opponents at home. All the majesty of his oratory was there, but with a new note of appeal, lacking the usual confidence of support'. John Colville, *The Fringes of Power: Downing Street Diaries, Volume II, October 1941–April 1955* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985; Sceptre edn, 1987), 15 Feb. 1942, p. 46.

<sup>127</sup> Stuart Ball (ed.), *Parliament and Politics in the age of Churchill and Attlee: The Headlam Diaries, 1935–1951* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1999), 15 Feb. 1942, p. 295. See also Nicolson (ed.), *Nicolson Diaries*, where Nicolson noted that Churchill appealed for national unity in an unfortunate manner which recalled Neville Chamberlain (a barbed insult indeed), 15 Feb. 1942, p. 258.

<sup>128</sup> Nigel Nicolson (ed.), *The Harold Nicolson Diaries, 1907–1963* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004), 16 Feb. 1942, p. 258.

largest capitulation in British history' to avoid personal criticism.<sup>129</sup> After all, any detailed examination of his pre-war and wartime record could damage his future political aspirations which, in 1950, looked close to becoming a reality.

Surprisingly, the galleys and proofs for the chapter on Singapore are less revealing than other chapters. Normally the positioning of the actual chapter itself changed repeatedly, as did the sub-titles, but compared to other chapters, such as the 'Penalties in Malaya' chapter proofs, little was changed. Annotations and notes were made on the proofs, and facts were checked and verified. When compared however, to the habitual re-structuring of sub-titles and the seemingly endless and sometimes inconsistent positioning and then re-positioning of other chapters, very little re-arranging was carried out. Churchill felt that his wartime errors of judgement should be underplayed in order to preserve his postwar, almost mythic-like, reputation of being omnipotent and omnipresent. As he was so appalled by the loss of imperial prestige which the fall of Singapore had caused, especially the way in which the 'manner of this defeat was its worst consequence',<sup>130</sup> Churchill tried to misdirect the reader by giving strategic accounts of flaws and poor happenstance. It was hoped that this brave-faced admission of such a grievous defeat would be enough to maintain his wartime reputation and his post-war ambitions.

Pownall had recorded in his diary that the loss of Singapore would have far-reaching consequences for the British Empire. Nicolson elaborated on this sentiment when he wrote that the surrender had been 'a terrific blow to all of us'. Not merely, Nicolson continued, due to the 'immediate dangers which threaten the Indian Ocean and the menace to the communications with the Middle East', and not because it appeared that the British were 'only half-hearted in fighting the whole-hearted'.<sup>131</sup> Nicolson felt most aggrieved by the way in which the disaster of Singapore had completely knocked the confidence out of the empire. Whilst the surrender at Singapore had dented the military egos of the Chiefs of

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<sup>129</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 81.

<sup>130</sup> Brian P. Farrell, *The Defence and Fall of Singapore, 1940–1942* (Stroud: Tempus, 2005; edn, 2006), p. 414.

<sup>131</sup> Nigel Nicolson, (ed.), *The Harold Nicolson Diaries, 1907-1963* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004), 27 Feb. 1942, p. 258.

Staff and threatened to hamper the war effort in both the Middle and Near East, it was once again the wider connotations which concerned Nicolson (just as they had done Pownall). It was the wider threat to the entire empire being destabilized which concerned Nicolson. The prospect of being accused of fighting half-heartedly would have hit Churchill hard, especially as the battle-fresh, anti-imperialist Americans had only recently started their war. To be seen to be fighting half-heartedly for an empire which supposedly meant so much to the British, made a mockery of Churchill's imperialism. This was why he tried to distance himself from having to confront those realisations all over again when it came to editing his memoirs.

Churchill attempted to hide his role in the underlying reasons for the weakness of imperial prestige in the Far East and to downplay what he had thought would be 'merely a passing phase'.<sup>132</sup> Although it was accepted that Hong Kong and Singapore were formally back under the control of the British Commonwealth in the postwar world, the truth of the matter was that, despite all of his contrary prevarications, Churchill willingly sacrificed the Far Eastern arm of the British Empire in order to protect what he saw as the heart of the empire—the British Raj in India. It was not simply a matter of having turned his mind to the situation in the Far East when 'it was too late'.<sup>133</sup> It was that Churchill had known that this was a risk he and Britain would willingly take. As he had written to Chamberlain in March 1939:

On no account must anything which threatens in the Far East divert us from this prime objective. ... If Japan joins the hostile combination, which is by no means certain, for she has her hands full, all our interests and possessions in the Yellow Sea will be temporarily effaced. We must not be drawn from our main theme by any effort to protect

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<sup>132</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 540.

<sup>133</sup> CHUR 4/258/58: Churchill, skeleton draft, undated.



them. ... we must bear the losses and punishment,  
awaiting the final result of the struggle.<sup>134</sup>

In a letter to Martin Gilbert, Dennis Kelly wrote that he had once asked Churchill 'what were the biggest mistakes in the War?' Churchill's 'immediate answer', according to Kelly's recollection, was 'losing Singapore and letting the Russians into Europe'.<sup>135</sup> Churchill may have dictated a note which read that he wanted 'to tell about the awful losses not only in Singapore but in Java. A complete cataract of disaster', but this did not stop him from portraying the losses of Hong Kong, Malaya, and Singapore as inevitable, unfortunate, and debilitating, respectively.<sup>136</sup> At the time however, none of the losses were anticipated as being more than temporary sacrifices—made only to secure India's safety. Churchill's imperial rhetoric had to be toned-down in his memoirs. After all, Attlee's Labour government had clawed back Hong Kong as well as the strategically important Singapore naval base. They had also secured Malaya (at least for the time being). Whilst Churchill had been prepared to lose face during the war and to concede territory to an imperial enemy, he was not however prepared to concede territory to a British imperial subject—to Gandhi. This Churchill would never do. The following chapter will examine his portrayal of his reactions to the series of crises in India, from 1942 to 1943—the failure of the Cripps Mission, the 'Quit India' campaign, the search for a new Viceroy, and the Bengal famine.

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<sup>134</sup> PREM 1/345/9: 'Memorandum on Sea-Power, 1939', Churchill to Neville Chamberlain, 25 Mar. 1939.

<sup>135</sup> DEKE 1: Denis Kelly to Martin Gilbert, 11 Oct. 1988.

<sup>136</sup> CHUR 4/261/197, 'Burma', notes by Churchill, undated.

**Illustration IV**



Leslie Illingworth, 'Fun While It Lasts', *Daily Mail*, 18 Feb. 1942.

Illingworth depicted Japanese Commander-in-Chief General Hideki Tojo trying on the jacket of Malaya and a hat with Singapore plumage—in an Australian bedroom no less (the hat on the bed gives this away). The coats of Burma, New Zealand and India are in the wardrobe waiting to be tried on for size and on the boots (to the left of the chair) are the names of Java and Sumatra.

## Chapter V: Churchill's Portrayal of India, 1942 to 1943.

How great the temptation is in such circumstances to look for shortcuts, or easy solutions ... But we have got to the point ... in the Indian situation in which shortcuts are no good and ... we have to face the hard facts.<sup>1</sup>

Writing in November 1942, an exasperated Lord Linlithgow (the longest-serving Viceroy of India), lamented how he had been unable to implement shortcuts and easy solutions regarding the Cripps Mission, 'Quit India', and the search for a new Viceroy. The 'hard fact' which confronted Churchill was that the issue of Indian self-government was not only back on the table but, in 1942, the allied war effort and American sentiment ensured that it could no longer be ignored. In effect, the wartime struggle for power east of Suez was no longer against the Japanese—it was a struggle against the left in Britain, against American anti-imperialism and against Indian nationalism. Churchill's views on India were notorious, and had 'chained him to the back benches' in the 1930s,<sup>2</sup> but when it came to his memoirs, the question was not whether his 'curious complex about India' would taint his portrayal of the Cripps Mission, the Quit India campaign, the search for a new Viceroy, and the Bengal famine of 1943, but how could Churchill stop his past from affecting his present and his future?<sup>3</sup>

In Churchill's *Second World War*, there remains a discernible and, at times, highly distinct difference between Churchill the wartime leader and Churchill the post-war statesman. Considering that Churchill wanted to be Prime Minister of peacetime Britain it is no surprise that Churchill the post-war

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Mansergh and E. W. R. Lumby (eds), *Transfer of Power: Volume III, Reassertion of Authority, Gandhi's fast, and the succession to the Viceroyalty, 21 September 1942–12 June 1943* (London: HMSO, 1971), Linlithgow to Amery, 1 Nov. 1942, p. 183.

<sup>2</sup> Robin James Moore, *Churchill, Cripps, and India: 1939–1945* (Oxford: OUP, 1979), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Penderel Moon (ed.), *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal* (Karachi: OUP, 1974), p. 3.

statesman is, by far, the loudest voice. But whenever India featured in his narrative, the wartime and post-war Churchill became so intertwined that it still proves difficult to separate one from the other. This difficulty is not helped by the way in which the series of crises which affected India in 1942 to 1943 either led into each other, or occurred concurrently. Arguably the Quit India campaign was a result of the failure of the Cripps Mission, and the search for a new Viceroy preceded the origins of the Mission itself. John H. Plumb noted how Churchill had the ability in his memoirs to drive roads through the chaos and confusion of the Second World War.<sup>4</sup> But when Churchill attempted to narrate the circumstances of this critical period in the allied wartime story, the chaos and confusion enabled him to 'bury his mistakes',<sup>5</sup> and diffuse the impact that this period of 'shocks and change' had had upon his post-war reputation.<sup>6</sup> Whilst Churchill's narrative mirrored the seesawing of the chaotic episodes themselves, the already confused narrative became further muddled due to the large amount of material that Churchill included about this period and especially about his portrayal of the background to the Cripps Mission. Although a welcome contrast to the rare and infrequent glances he generally made east of Suez, this increase in volume became part of the overall attempt at misdirection.

The scene that Churchill set for the failure of Cripps's Mission to India was long-ranging. It began in the third volume of memoirs, and focused on Cripps\* himself and what Churchill deemed to be his ineffectiveness as British Ambassador to Moscow from June 1940 till January 1942.<sup>7</sup> Churchill's account

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<sup>4</sup> John H. Plumb, 'The Historian', in A.J.P. Taylor (et al), *Churchill: Four Faces and the Man* (London: Allen Lane, 1969), p. 149.

<sup>5</sup> Harry C. Butcher, *Three Years with Eisenhower: The Personal Diary of Captain Harry C. Butcher, USNR Naval Aide to General Eisenhower, 1942–1945* (London: Heinemann, 1946), 31 May, 1943, p. 270. Cited by David Reynolds, *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), p. 40, fn. 11.

<sup>6</sup> CHAR 20/99B/172: Churchill's speech at the farewell dinner in honour of Wavell before leaving to take up his post as Viceroy of India, 6 Oct. 1943.

<sup>7</sup> See Peter Clarke, *The Cripps Version: The Life of Sir Stafford Cripps 1889–1952* (London: Allen Lane, 2002), pp. 183–241, for a nuanced yet brief account

of Cripps in Russia was quite damning as well as inaccurate, and it laid the groundwork for his portrayal of Cripps's failure to solve the political deadlock in India in April 1942.<sup>8</sup> Put simply, Churchill distanced himself from the lack of resolution achieved in India in 1942 by using Cripps as a scapegoat.<sup>9</sup> Unsurprisingly Churchill judged it far less a folly to pillory Cripps (who was Chancellor of the Exchequer in Attlee's Labour government and known as 'Austerity Cripps' at the time of publication of the third volume of memoirs), than it was to jeopardise his own political future—especially since the prospect of a general election was looming. Churchill made no mention of how Cripps had to be constantly on guard in Moscow. Nor did Churchill mention Cripps's unenviable task of interweaving and satisfying the demands, mentalities and egos of two of the most challenging leaders that Britain and Russia had ever had—Churchill and Stalin. Churchill ended his initial diatribe on Cripps's behaviour in Moscow by writing that he could not 'form any final judgement upon whether my message, if delivered with all the promptness and ceremony prescribed, would have altered events'. But the damage was done, and it was nonetheless a damning indictment upon Cripps.<sup>10</sup> It was also an indication as to how Churchill

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of Cripps in Moscow; and Gabriel Gorodetsky, *Stafford Cripps' Mission to Moscow, 1940–1942* (Cambridge: CUP, 1984), for a fuller analysis of Cripps in Moscow.

<sup>8</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Volume III, The Grand Alliance* (London: Cassell, 1950), pp. 315–52. Churchill's account was inaccurate in that Cripps replied to him explaining why he delayed delivery of the telegram on the 5 April and not, as Churchill maintained, on 12 April 1941.

<sup>9</sup> Clearly not everyone thought of Cripps as a failure in Moscow: 'We ally ourselves with the USSR at last! Cripps must have been doing excellent work'. Maggie Joy Blunt (writer), who kept a sporadic diary for Mass-Observation from 1939–50, in Sandra Koa Wing (ed.), *Mass-Observation: Britain in the Second World War* (London: Folio Society, 2007), entry dated 22 July 1941, p. 100.

<sup>10</sup> Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, p. 323.

would portray, or rather manipulate, the history of Cripps's role in the Mission to India.<sup>11</sup>

Considering how lackadaisical Churchill's glances eastwards were, the chapter he dedicated to the Cripps Mission is comparatively lengthy.<sup>12</sup> The overall theme of the fourth volume was 'How the power of the Grand Alliance became preponderant'.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps Churchill was being intentionally ironic, as it was mainly pressure from American anti-imperialists that ensured he could no longer prevaricate over the Indian Congress, the rise of nationalism in India, and the supposed lack of wartime spirit and energy coming from India—the 'central bastion'.<sup>14</sup> In order to placate wartime American sensibilities about the questionable nature of British imperialism (especially the Raj in India), Churchill had no alternative but to despatch Cripps to India. Churchill admitted in his draft notes on '1942' that Cripps, having 'come home from Russia with such left-wing prestige', was the right man for the Indian mission.<sup>15</sup> But he also wanted in his forward-looking post-war memoirs to solidify the Anglo-American alliance in the English-speaking national consciousness. This presented Churchill with a problem as the Cripps Mission (and India in general) revealed the true nature of the wartime 'special relationship'—a mutually convenient yet temporary and relatively volatile amalgamation of two world powers. Considering how much Churchill needed to coddle American support in 1951, and after having devoted

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<sup>11</sup> See H. Hanak, 'Sir Stafford Cripps as Ambassador to Moscow, May 1940–June 1941', *English Historical Review*, 94/370 (Jan. 1979), pp. 48–70; and 'Sir Stafford Cripps as Ambassador to Moscow, June 1941–January 1942', *English Historical Review*, 97/383 (Apr. 1982), pp. 332–44, for a pro-Churchill version of Cripps role in Moscow; and Gabriel Gorodetsky, 'Churchill's Warning to Stalin: A Reappraisal', *Historical Journal*, 29/4 (1986), pp. 979–90.

<sup>12</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Volume IV, Hinge of Fate* (London: Cassell, 1951). The chapter is in Book I, 'The Onslaught of Japan', pp. 181–96.

<sup>13</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, theme page for the volume.

<sup>14</sup> Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, Its Officers and Men* (London: Macmillan, 1986), p. 471.

<sup>15</sup> CHUR 4/256/2: Churchill, 'Notes 1942', 12 July 1949.

almost a whole volume to the burgeoning wartime Anglo-American alliance, he was positively vituperative when dealing with Roosevelt's 1942 opinions on the Indian problem. As Reynolds remarked, 'Churchill's harshest words about Roosevelt ... are reserved for the President's interference in the affairs of the British Empire over India'.<sup>16</sup>

The grounds for the despatch of the Cripps Mission were subtly twisted by Churchill in his account written in the post-war, post-Indian independence world. He attributed the reasoning behind the Cripps Mission to the 'staggering blow' of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor which, in turn, had increased the 'stresses latent in Indian politics'.<sup>17</sup> Churchill claimed that it was the Indian political leaders—especially Gandhi (who was supported by a 'powerful body of articulate opinion')—who believed that 'India should remain passive and neutral in the world conflict'.<sup>18</sup> He attributed the increased rancour and division between Hindu and Muslim Indian political leaders to the visit by the Chinese Generalissimo, Chiang Kai-Shek\* and his wife, to India in February 1942.<sup>19</sup> Although the 'object of their journey was to rally Indian opinion against Japan', Churchill wrote that the visit had actually increased the Indian party leaders 'pressure upon the British Government ... to yield to the demands of Congress'.<sup>20</sup> Churchill acknowledged that whilst there had been some attempt to create a 'common front' by a handful of Congress leaders,<sup>21</sup> it was ultimately 'Indian politics and the Press' who 'echoed the rising discords between the Hindu and the Moslem communities'.<sup>22</sup> By emphasising how he wanted to avoid 'dealing

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<sup>16</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 336.

<sup>17</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 182.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182–3.

<sup>19</sup> See Jonathan Fenby, *Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek and the China He Lost* (London: Free Press, 2003; Simon and Schuster, edn, 2005); and Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-Shek and the Struggle for Modern China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2009).

<sup>20</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 183.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183–4.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

only with party politicians',<sup>23</sup> Churchill's benevolent instance of equal treatment for all imperial subjects shone through the pages of his memoirs, or so he hoped. He was ostensibly being dutiful and thinking of the lower castes and the untouchables, who had no political representation in Congress. If these reasons alone were not enough, Churchill then turned westwards.

America, or rather Roosevelt, loomed large in Churchill's account of the origins of the Mission.<sup>24</sup> The 'increasingly direct interest in Indian affairs as the Japanese advance into Asia spread westwards' concerned Americans who, despite having 'little experience' on imperial responsibilities 'began to express views and offer counsel on Indian affairs'.<sup>25</sup> Churchill almost proudly boasted that, in December 1941, he had 'reacted so strongly and at such length' when Roosevelt had first 'discussed the Indian problem' that 'he never raised it verbally again'.<sup>26</sup> Yet it was raised again, and Churchill reiterated how important the balance in Indian politics between Muslim and Hindu was to the Indian Army.<sup>27</sup> In the original message to the President, Churchill attempted to illustrate that constitutional change would come *after* the war, and he demonstrated how he had not been the main stumbling block by sending Roosevelt 'full statements of the Indian position from Indian sources'.<sup>28</sup>

Churchill reprinted Roosevelt's reply, which he introduced as the President's 'private views about India'.<sup>29</sup> Roosevelt proceeded to give Churchill

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 184.

<sup>24</sup> Roosevelt was not the only American who attempted to persuade Churchill to approach the situation in India differently. American Liberal intellectuals had been agitating during the interwar years with the same aim in mind. Although not entirely successful in their remit, 'if they did not hearten the struggle in India, they at least provided it with a voice in the West that nationalist leaders welcomed'. Alan Raucher, 'American Anti-Imperialists and the Pro-India Movement, 1900–1932', *Pacific Historical Review*, 43/1 (1974), p. 110.

<sup>25</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 185.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., Churchill to Roosevelt, 4 Mar. 1942, p. 185–6.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 186.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 188.



a history lesson which, in this instance, Churchill printed in its entirety.<sup>30</sup> Roosevelt suggested that a 'central temporary governing group' be set up and have 'certain executive and administrative powers over public services, such as finances, railways, telegraphs and other things that we call public services'.<sup>31</sup> Roosevelt wrote that this

might give a new slant in India itself, and it might cause the people there to forget hard feelings, to become more loyal to the British Empire, and to stress the danger of Japanese domination, together with the advantage of peaceful evolution as against chaotic revolution.<sup>32</sup>

Whether Roosevelt intended to insult Churchill's anachronistic view of empire is unknown, but he succeeded when he wrote that 'such a move' would be 'strictly in line with the world changes of the past half-century',<sup>33</sup> and that he hoped that whatever Churchill did, 'the move will be made from London and that there should be no criticism in India that it is being made grudgingly or by compulsion'.<sup>34</sup>

By printing Roosevelt's private thoughts in full, Churchill was arguably illustrating to the post-war world that American pressure had left him with little choice but to send Cripps. Although Churchill described Cripps as a man who was 'deeply versed in Indian politics and had close relations with Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Nehru', it is hard at this juncture in his memoirs not to remember how Churchill had berated Cripps for being his very own turbulent priest in Moscow.<sup>35</sup> Despite the intervening years, Churchill's passion about Indian affairs had neither moderated nor become more temperate. Finally, in the long lead up to the actual Mission itself, Churchill quoted Roosevelt as writing that

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., Roosevelt to Churchill, 11 Mar. 1942, p. 189.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 184.

although India was 'strictly speaking none of my business' it was 'part and parcel of the successful fight that you and I are making'.<sup>36</sup>

Immediately after this telegram, Churchill launched into his tirade against 'the dangers of trying to apply any superficial resemblances which may be noticed to the conduct of war'.<sup>37</sup> In other words, Churchill did not believe that Roosevelt had a realistic grasp of the Raj's situation in early 1942. Churchill reiterated his opinion against the American anti-imperialist attitude when he wrote that:

for seventy or eighty years we kept our colonies absolutely open to the trade of the whole world ..., and ... it was Americans, by their high tariff policy, who led the world astray, it is pretty good cheek of them now coming to school-marm us into proper behaviour.<sup>38</sup>

Churchill portrayed American anti-imperialist sensibilities as having no grasp upon the nature of imperial power, especially during wartime. Finally, with all these reasons for a political deadlock spewing forth, Cripps set out for Delhi and Churchill wrote how he felt that 'an offer of Dominion status after the war must be made in the most impressive manner to the peoples of India'.<sup>39</sup>

Churchill was not the only one to see how American opinion was so detrimental to the origins of the Cripps Mission and how it was criticised in light

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<sup>36</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, Roosevelt to Churchill, 11 Mar. 1942, p. 189–90. See Warren Kimball (ed.), *Churchill and Roosevelt, The Complete Correspondence: Volume I, Alliance Emerging* (London: Collins, 1984), pp. 402–4, in order to verify the fullness with which Churchill reprinted the telegram.

<sup>37</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, Roosevelt to Churchill, 11 Mar. 1942, p. 190. See also Churchill's portrayal of his reaction to the Sapru telegram which he received in Washington, December 1941, in *Grand Alliance*, pp. 614–15; and Churchill to Attlee, 7 Jan. 1942, *Transfer of Power*, vol. I, doc. 6.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, Churchill to Herbert Morrison (Home Secretary), 7 Jan. 1943, Appendix C, p. 824.

<sup>39</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 184.

of its failure. As Viscount Halifax\*, Churchill's long-serving British Ambassador in Washington, remarked, 'a great deal always turns upon the actual phrasing employed in any statement about India, and from the American point of view this has not always been happy'.<sup>40</sup> Halifax continued to write that he hoped Amery would 'not allow this aspect to be underrated' whilst acknowledging that the British Government was in a very tricky situation regarding the political deadlock in India.<sup>41</sup> Finally, regarding American perception of India, he wrote that Amery would have to ensure that 'all those who speak with authority about India need to put the right label on the bottle all the time for American patients'.<sup>42</sup> In light of the failure of the Cripps Mission, Roosevelt sent William Phillips (1878–1968), a career diplomat, to Delhi to help ease the situation and rally a quick and positive outcome.<sup>43</sup> Whilst Linlithgow accepted Phillips as a 'personal representative of the President' and recognised the 'compliment implicated in this', he believed that an American presence in Delhi implied British imperial weakness.<sup>44</sup> Amery confirmed that Phillips' presence was 'likely to cause speculation in India regarding American mediation' and that Linlithgow, if the matter arose, was to strenuously state that 'there is no question of external mediation'.<sup>45</sup> Linlithgow wished the matter to be referred to Churchill who, so Linlithgow advocated, ought to 'bring strong pressure on Halifax to stand up to the State Department over this'.<sup>46</sup>

Amidst the crises in India, the 'febrile agitation' from America, and the Japanese invasion of Burma, Churchill's preoccupation with victory in Europe

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<sup>40</sup> Halifax to Amery, 20 Nov. 1942, *Transfer of Power*, vol. III, doc. 203.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> See Kenton J. Clymer, 'Franklin D. Roosevelt, Louis Johnson, India, and Anticolonialism: Another Look', *Pacific Historical Review*, 57/3 (1988), especially pp. 262–72.

<sup>44</sup> Linlithgow to Amery, 25 Nov. 1942, *Transfer of Power*, vol. III, doc. 214.

<sup>45</sup> Amery to Govt. of India, 25 Nov. 1942, Ibid., doc. 215.

<sup>46</sup> Linlithgow to Amery, 25 Nov. 1942, Ibid., doc. 214.

was still paramount.<sup>47</sup> But Cripps finally set out on what Churchill described as a 'thankless and hazardous task'.<sup>48</sup> Yet in his message to Linlithgow, Churchill revealed that although Cripps was 'bound by the draft declaration', the most important part of the Mission was that the British Government's 'sincerity will be proved to the world' irrespective of whether the Mission itself was a success or not.<sup>49</sup> The ultimate aim of the Cripps Mission, as Churchill portrayed it was 'to prove our honesty of purpose and to gain time'.<sup>50</sup> Finally, in Churchill's long pre-ambule to the Mission, he wrote that as far as he was concerned 'nothing matters except the successful and unflinching defence of India as a part of the general victory'.<sup>51</sup> This seemingly innocuous phrase revealed Churchill's genuine and deepest desire: for India to remain within the bounds of the British Empire, both for the duration of the war and after. He was undertaking the Cripps Mission only to calm American anti-imperialist fears and to bolster the European war effort. This is seen more clearly when he wrote that the 'essence of the British proposal was that the British Government undertook solemnly to grant full independence to India if demanded by a Constituent Assembly after the war'.<sup>52</sup> The key was not 'full independence', but '*if*'. Churchill was hoping that by continuing to play the Indian leaders off against each other no such demand would be made.

Churchill employed his usual tactic of using the words of others to narrate what he could not, for fear of exposing himself. Regarding the failure of the Cripps Mission he wrote that the 'result' could not have been 'better stated than in Sir Stafford Cripps's telegrams'.<sup>53</sup> Cripps's two explanatory telegrams<sup>54</sup> were

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<sup>47</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, Churchill to Linlithgow, 10 Mar. 1942, p. 190;

*Transfer of Power*, vol. I, doc. 294.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., Churchill to Linlithgow, 10 Mar. 1942, p. 191.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 191.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., Cripps to Churchill, 11 Apr. 1942, pp. 191–2; also *Transfer of Power*, vol. I, doc. 597.

followed by Churchill writing that he was 'able to bear this news' as he had thought it 'probable from the beginning'.<sup>55</sup> Whilst Churchill probably wrote this to highlight his omniscience at the time, when the volume was published, it questioned why, since he had thought the Mission would probably fail, had he not made a more robust effort to solve the deadlock. Did he undertake the Mission solely to appease American agitation? Was his supposed concern over Indian self-government and Indian independence merely smoke and mirrors? Churchill wrote that he 'sought to comfort' Cripps whom he thought would bitterly 'feel the failure of his Mission'.<sup>56</sup> Churchill had already cast aspersions on Cripps' character and effectiveness when he had implied that Cripps had been a troublesome ambassador in Moscow. There had been a small backlash against Churchill's treatment of Cripps' tenure in Moscow when it had been published in 1950, not least from Cripps himself as the two wartime colleagues harangued each other on the electioneering platforms.<sup>57</sup> When portraying the failure of the Cripps mission to India, Churchill knew he had to be far more guarded in his responses; if he were not, his own role in the failure would be laid bare. Even though Churchill wrote that he had solaced Cripps over the failure to break the political deadlock in India at the time, his consolation had been like the mission itself—done for appearances rather than out of genuine concern.

Cripps was a direct contrast to Churchill, whose opinion on the need to advance towards a day of Indian self-government had been bandied about since the early 1930s. As Churchill's political star was descending, Cripps' was rising. By July 1938, Cripps was one of the main speakers at the Conference on Peace and Empire (organised by the India League and the London Federation of Peace Councils) under the chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru. Cripps spoke of how the

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<sup>55</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 192.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> On the electioneering platform of 1950, Churchill said that Cripps's devaluing the pound had shown how Cripps's 'clear mind sees so plainly the harm he has wrought from this country'. To which Cripps replied that he regretted 'that a person whom I have admired for his wartime leadership ... should sink to quite this level of guttersnipe politics'. See Clarke, *The Cripps Version*, p. 552–3.

British needed to give themselves a 'mental shaking'<sup>58</sup> and needed to wake-up to the 'responsibilities and implications of Imperialist domination'.<sup>59</sup> The point which Cripps stressed was that he wanted to encourage British imperialism to prepare itself and

to face up to the very real question of the future development of the British Dominions, colonies, protectorates, mandated territories and spheres of influence, especially in their relationship to world problems, and above all in their reaction to the problem of peace and war.<sup>60</sup>

Whilst this was a problem of 'great difficulty',<sup>61</sup> its resolution revolved around how to 'devise the most rapid and effective means' by which those who were exploited under the British Empire – the 'victims of capitalism and imperialism' – would not 'by their very victimisation add to the world dangers of war'.<sup>62</sup> From this speech it appears that Cripps was far more knowledgeable than Churchill and, with the benefit of hindsight, far more prophetic about the crises which would befall Anglo-Indian relations in the first half of the Second World War.

Cripps was not against the British Empire. He was, however, against its exploitative nature which was in stark contrast to Churchill's ostensibly benevolent and paternalistic imperialism. As Churchill's physician observed, they were 'two men ... not designed by nature to run in double harness'.<sup>63</sup> When Cripps returned to Britain on 21 April he declined to talk to the Press about the

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<sup>58</sup> Sir Stafford Cripps, *Empire* (London: The India League, 1938), p. 4.

<sup>59</sup> Cripps, *Empire*, p. 4.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Lord Charles Moran, *Churchill: The Struggle for Survival, 1945–1960* (London: Constable, 1966), p. 74.

Mission.<sup>64</sup> He had been quoted before as saying that even though the outcome had not been a resolution of the political deadlock, the Mission itself had not wholly failed as the 'failure to succeed' would have been 'a lesser evil than failure to make the attempt'. This was the general perception of the Mission by the Press.<sup>65</sup> Churchill could have lifted this line about retrieving the setback straight from *The Times*.

Churchill's portrayal of Cripps as the wrong man for the Mission was severe.<sup>66</sup> Amery thought that it had 'obviously [been] a great mistake sending Cripps out', but it was the timing of the Mission, 'when we were being defeated right and left by the Japanese', and not Cripps himself that had in Amery's opinion led to the Mission's failure.<sup>67</sup> Churchill and Amery had once had what Jock Colville referred to as a 'blood row' over the August Offer of 1940.<sup>68</sup> This 'offer' was an intermediary attempt to persuade the Indian National Congress to back the war effort in India; promising the expansion of the Viceroy's Executive Council to include Indian representatives, and to create an advisory body (upon which both British and Indian princely state members would sit) that would draw up the principles of a post-war Indian constitution. Rejected by Congress as an insincere carrot on a stick, the August offer revealed the difference in attitude between Amery and Churchill towards India.

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<sup>64</sup> 'Sir Stafford Cripps Home, Evening Talk with Mr. Churchill', *The Times*, 22 Apr. 1942.

<sup>65</sup> 'Retrieving a Setback', *The Times*, 13 Apr. 1942.

<sup>66</sup> Churchill was not the only man to think this of Cripps. Lord Beaverbrook, William Maxwell Aitken (1879–1964), the Press baron and MP for Ashton-under-Lyme, said that Cripps had 'the genius of the untried'. By which he meant that Cripps was 'a very able man indeed but, you know, he has his defects; he is in some ways difficult'. Beaverbrook to Crozier, 16 March 1942, in A.J.P. Taylor (ed.), *Off the Record: W.P. Crozier, Political Interviews, 1933–1943* (London: Hutchinson, 1973), p. 306.

<sup>67</sup> Amery to Linlithgow, 17 Nov. 1942, *Transfer of Power*, vol. III, doc. 194.

<sup>68</sup> John Colville, *The Fringes of Power: Downing Street Diaries, 1939–1955, Volume I: September 1939–September 1941* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985; Sceptre edn, 1986), 26 July 1940, p. 236.

Two years later, in 1942, Amery still thought that Churchill's image in India was one of the main hindrances to successfully brokering a political deal—so much so that Amery suggested that by 'associating himself personally' with the 1940 declaration it would have possibly helped ease the way for successful negotiations.<sup>69</sup> Amery repeated his concern regarding Churchill's image and perception in India when he concluded that any response Churchill made should be both positive and measured as the situation needed to be handled in a tentative and sensitive manner.<sup>70</sup> According to Amery, the 'whole Cripps business developed as an alternative to a reply by telegram to Sapru & Co' which he had drafted for Churchill.<sup>71</sup> It appeared to his contemporaries that Churchill's reluctance to enter into parleys and tangled factions (in the period before the reasons behind the Cripps Mission became imperative) was one of the reasons why it failed.<sup>72</sup> This idea, that Churchill should have listened to Amery in 1941, was expressed most succinctly by Nicolson in his diary, when he wrote that the Cripps Mission was done 'under threats from the Japanese' of which there was only one conclusion: 'our whole Eastern Empire has gone. ... Poor little

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<sup>69</sup> Amery to Linlithgow, 13 Jan. 1942, *Transfer of Power*, vol. I, doc. 10.

<sup>70</sup> Amery to Attlee, 16 Jan. 1942, *Ibid.*, doc. 15.

<sup>71</sup> Amery to Linlithgow, 17 Nov. 1942, *Transfer of Power*, vol. III, doc. 194.

<sup>72</sup> Attempts to reconcile Congress with Jinnah's Moslem League had been made by non-Parliamentary and non-Governmental bodies. One such example, in early 1942, was Mr Horace Alexander, of the Friends Service Council of London and Dublin, who had sent a letter to Amery 'congratulating him on the release of Congress prisoners and forwarding information on the efforts made by the All-India Conference of Indian Christians to bring about a reconciliation between the leaders of the various parties'. See *Transfer of Power*, vol. I, fn. 9, p. 18.

Unsurprisingly, Churchill's portrayal of the era leading up to the Cripps Mission ignores such British led attempts as it would question his portrayal. For Indian approaches as mediation, especially Sapru's, see David A. Low, 'The Mediator's Moment: Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and the Antecedents to the Cripps Mission to India, 1940–42', in R.F. Holland and G. Rizvi (eds), *Perspectives on Imperialism and Decolonization: Essays in Honour of A.F. Madden* (London: Cass, 1984), pp. 146–64.



England'.<sup>73</sup> Perhaps if Amery had offered the proposal it may have been 'regarded as less sensational' and there may have been 'a much better chance of acceptance'.<sup>74</sup> In itself this indicates that from the outset Churchill had set the Mission to fail by choosing Cripps as mediator and broker.<sup>75</sup> By 1942 the Raj needed to have collaborative powers and leaders on their side in India in order to underline the sincerity of the promise of constitutional change in the immediate postwar era. But as collaborative powers and leaders were necessary, especially at this juncture of the war, it implied how weak the British Raj had become. No wonder then, that Churchill preferred to risk the wrath of Cripps, and possibly Attlee, rather than admit his own failings in his memoirs to a post-war world.

Churchill often relied upon the opinion of one of his loyal friends and confidants, Jan Christian Smuts.\* Churchill wrote that he 'found great comfort in feeling that our minds were in step', and he was always interested in Smuts's opinion on the progression of the war.<sup>76</sup> With the Cripps Mission having been universally acknowledged as a failed 'expensive experiment',<sup>77</sup> Smuts warned Churchill that whilst Egypt was 'the nodal point of our whole Empire strategy',<sup>78</sup> it relied upon the problem of 'holding' on to the Middle East which, in turn, meant 'the mastery of the Indian Ocean' and 'the holding of India'.<sup>79</sup> It was the 'holding of India' with which Churchill wrestled. On 7 August 1942, the All-India Congress Committee met in Bombay. On the following day, they adopted

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<sup>73</sup> Nigel Nicolson (ed.), *The Harold Nicolson Diaries, 1907–1963* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004), 30 Mar. 1942, p. 260.

<sup>74</sup> Amery to Linlithgow, 17 Nov. 1942, *Transfer of Power*, vol. III, doc. 194.

<sup>75</sup> Low, 'The Mediator's Moment'; and 'Working with the grain: Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and the antecedents to the Cripps Declaration 1942' in D.A. Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism: The Imprint of Ambiguity, 1929–1942* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), pp. 303–44; and Nicholas Owen, 'The Cripps Mission of 1942: A reinterpretation', *JICH*, 30/1 (2002).

<sup>76</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Volume V, Closing the Ring* (London: Cassell, 1952), p. 112.

<sup>77</sup> Linlithgow to Amery, 1 Nov. 1942, *Transfer of Power*, vol. III, doc. 131.

<sup>78</sup> CHAR 20/78/59: Smuts to Churchill, 25 July 1942.

<sup>79</sup> CHAR 20/78/60: Smuts to Churchill, 25 July 1942.

the 'Quit India' resolution.<sup>80</sup> The Raj's hold on India appeared to be irrevocably slipping away.

Searching for any mention of 'Quit India' in Churchill's memoirs is a hard task as he neither mentioned it by name, nor did he allocate more than two pages of text to it.<sup>81</sup> Churchill reverted to type in that he preferred to highlight how pivotal to the war effort his trip to Cairo (in August 1942) had been to the changes in the Middle and Far Eastern command, as well as how valuable his visit to Moscow had been.<sup>82</sup> Once again, his overwhelming bias towards the war in the Middle East was visible, (whereas India and the Far East received comparatively little coverage) and his forward-looking political eye remained truly in focus.<sup>83</sup>

Churchill began his brief account of 'Quit India' by writing that during his 'absence from London a crisis had arisen in India'.<sup>84</sup> In itself this sentence reveals a great deal about how Churchill saw his mighty influence over India, not only during the war but also when narrating its history in India's post-independence period, as it suggests that had he been present in London the crisis would not have occurred. Holding Congress solely responsible for the 'aggressive policy' of sabotage, riots and disorder which 'became rampant over large tracts of the countryside', Churchill wrote that it was this 'most serious

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<sup>80</sup> For concise accounts of the campaign itself see: Patrick French, *Liberty or Death, India's Journey to Independence and Division* (London: Flamingo, 1998), pp. 149–69; Arthur Herman, *Gandhi and Churchill: The Epic Rivalry that Destroyed an Empire and Forged Our Age* (New York: Bantam Dell, 2008), pp. 488–503; Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India, 1885–1947* (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 388–405; and Auriol Weigold, *Churchill, Roosevelt and India: Propaganda During World War II* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 140–60. See 'The "Quit India" Resolution', 8 Aug. 1942, *Transfer of Power*, vol. II, doc. 470.

<sup>81</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, pp. 455–7.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 408–51.

<sup>83</sup> Reynolds does not refer to 'Quit India' either when he examines the fourth volume of Churchill's memoirs. Nor is there a reference to 'Quit India' in his index. See Reynolds, *In Command of History*, pp. 285–360.

<sup>84</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 455.

rebellion' which 'threatened to jeopardise the whole war effort in India in face of the Japanese invasion menace'.<sup>85</sup> He claimed that despite there being 'only one Englishman' on the Viceroy's Council, it nonetheless came to the 'unanimous decision to arrest and intern Gandhi, Nehru, and the principal members of the Congress Party'.<sup>86</sup>

Commenting on the subsequent 'voluminous protests' from Chiang Kai-Shek and Roosevelt regarding the disturbances in India, Churchill wrote that he not only 'resented this Chinese intervention' but also that he had reassured Roosevelt over Britain's ability to 'maintain order and carry on government with efficiency, and secure India's maximum contribution to the war'.<sup>87</sup> Roosevelt's reply comforted Churchill slightly, in that the President confirmed that it was 'wiser' to have Chiang Kai-Shek 'feel that his suggestions sent to me receive friendly consideration' rather than have him 'take action on his own initiative'.<sup>88</sup> Churchill sent the 'strongest assurances of support' to Linlithgow,<sup>89</sup> but the Viceroy's reply, included by Churchill in these passages, illustrated that he was not confident that the worst was over. Nonetheless, Linlithgow continued to write that he had 'good hope we may clear up the position before either Jap or German is well placed to put direct pressure on us'.<sup>90</sup> By using Linlithgow's exact words Churchill downplayed how little effect 'Quit India' had on the war effort. In fact his overall portrayal of 'Quit India' was reduced to one conclusion—it had been quashed easily and quickly, and that although it had been feared that it would turn into a rebellion similar in scale to the 'Sepoy Mutiny of 1857', it nonetheless 'fizzled out in a few months with hardly any loss of life'.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 455; p. 457; p. 455–6.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 456.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 456.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., Roosevelt to Churchill, 9 Aug. 1942, p. 456.

<sup>89</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 456.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., Linlithgow to Churchill, 20 Aug. 1942, p. 456.

<sup>91</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 457. See 'Table A: Evidence of the regional incidence of the 'Quit India movement' and its suppression, for the period ending

The telling of the tale was of paramount importance to Churchill. He was more concerned with how history 'sounded' rather than with how accurate a narrative he produced—his portrayal of 'Quit India' was no different.<sup>92</sup> But the impression gained from Churchill's version of the 'Quit India' campaign is erroneous and was one of his attempts at mis-direction. Firstly, he held Congress solely responsible for the implementation of 'Quit India' which, in itself, was inaccurate.<sup>93</sup> He depicted all the Congress leaders to be of the same view as Gandhi. In fact for a long time, Nehru had advocated full and total Indian cooperation with Allied forces in fighting the Axis and destroying both the Nazi threat and the Japanese menace.<sup>94</sup> Although Nehru had become 'profoundly depressed' when he had read Cripps's proposals for the first time, especially as he had expected 'something more substantial', he nonetheless realised the implications for India of increasing its war effort—when peace came, India would be guaranteed to be awarded her freedom.<sup>95</sup> As a consequence of his belief, Nehru was reported as saying that even though the Cripps mission had failed it was still 'the duty of every Indian to serve and defend India to the

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31 December 1943', in Judith M. Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy* (Oxford: OUP, 1985), pp. 312–13.

<sup>92</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 349.

<sup>93</sup> 'Quit India' has been described variously as a rebellion, or a revolt, or a movement, or an upsurge, or as a terror campaign. This research omits the word 'terror' but describes it as a campaign as it was translated into such widely differing and varied acts in each state, province or city that took part. A similar example would be acts of resistance in wartime France, which ranged from factory workers in Vichy-occupied areas placing mis-shaped bolts on German armaments, to acts of sabotage and murder by the Maquis. So too the Quit India campaign, as it was worded ambiguously so that it was up to the individual taking part as to what acts (which ranged from simple non-cooperation, or general strikes, and escalated at times into violence) would be undertaken and judged most effective.

<sup>94</sup> See Judith M. Brown, 'Gandhi and Nehru: Frustrated Visionaries?', *History Today*, 47/9 (1997), pp. 22–28.

<sup>95</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (London: Meridian, 1946), p. 389.

uttermost'.<sup>96</sup> During and immediately after the First World War, this had been the prevailing view and Gandhi had been one of its main proponents. It was in the aftermath of the Great War, especially with the Rowlatt Acts not being repealed and the horror of the events perpetrated by General Dyer at Jallianwala Bagh, that this view came to be seen as not only naive but also utterly fruitless.<sup>97</sup> The attempted concessions, starting with Morley-Minto (1909) and then ten years later Montagu-Chelmsford, had re-established the potential such a view had. In light of India's ever-increasing contribution to the Second World War, American anti-imperialist opinion, and the lean to the Left of Churchill's recently shuffled War Cabinet of February 1942, Nehru once again grasped this naïve hope and helped it turn into a reality. Unsurprisingly, Churchill made no mention of this in his memoirs as he preferred to highlight how his own steadfastness had enabled Britain to maintain order and quickly put down anything which had impacted on the war effort. Churchill hoped to show how dependable he had been, and could still be, under pressure and during adverse times.

Churchill portrayed the decision to arrest and intern Gandhi, Nehru and the principal leaders of Congress as one which was taken not only unanimously but also quickly.<sup>98</sup> Whilst the full extent of the failure of the Cripps mission was not officially admitted to the Commons until the end of July 1942, it was widely speculated about upon Cripps' return to Britain.<sup>99</sup> This meant that a period of three months elapsed before the Quit India campaign was launched on 8 August

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<sup>96</sup> 'Retrieving a Setback', *The Times*, 13 Apr. 1942.

<sup>97</sup> See Tim Coates (ed.), *The Amritsar Massacre, 1919: General Dyer in the Punjab* (London: HMSO, 1919; Uncovered Editions, HMSO, abridged edn. 2000); Nigel Collett, *The Butcher of Amritsar: General Reginald Dyer* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007); Alfred Draper, *Amritsar: The massacre that ended the Raj* (London: Cassell, 1981); and Nick Lloyd, *The Amritsar Massacre: The Untold Story of one Fateful Day* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

<sup>98</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 456.

<sup>99</sup> See: Alzada Cornstock, 'India Rejects British Self-Rule Plan', *Current History*, 2:9 (May 1942), pp. 175–80; 'Sir Stafford Cripps Home', *The Times*, 22 Apr. 1942; 'The Problem of India-Cause of Breakdown', *The Times*, 29 Apr. 1942; 'India after the Mission', *The Times*, 30 Apr. 1942.

1942. Churchill made no mention of how contingency plans for dealing with such an inevitability as Quit India, were already in place. Linlithgow had been warned, as early as January 1942, by Sir George Cunningham (the Governor of the North-West Frontier Province)<sup>100</sup> that although some local members of Congress had supported Gandhi's relinquishment of his leadership of Congress, 'as they think this will at least keep the door open for a settlement between Government and Congress', he did think that Gandhi was concealing his real motives for this action. Cunningham continued that even though Gandhi was no longer the official leader of Congress, Cunningham did 'not believe that Congress will go seriously against his wishes'.<sup>101</sup> Although it is speculation to suggest that the 'Quit India' campaign was the motive behind Gandhi's resignation, it did reveal (especially to Linlithgow and Amery) the need to have counter-measures in place to deal with any attempts at scuppering the Raj's wartime 'hold' on India.

Linlithgow had received news less than a month after Cripps's return to Britain which indicated that Gandhi was planning something. Sir Maurice Hallett (Governor of the United Province) informed the Viceroy of a 'certain amount of interesting information' about the All-India Congress meeting in Allahabad which he was receiving.<sup>102</sup> Predictably Churchill made no mention of the fact that intelligence had been gathered and contingency plans made as a precautionary measure. When the All-India Congress met on 7 August, furtive enquiries were made as to where the most suitable place would be to intern Gandhi—perhaps in Aden, or even in Nyasaland. Aware that such plans would be more problematic than imprisoning him in India, alternative arrangements were made.<sup>103</sup> As it took four months for the Quit India resolution to finally be

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<sup>100</sup> Sir George Cunningham (1888–1963) joined the Indian Civil Service in 1911 and served as Governor of the North-West Frontier Province three times: 1937–39; 1939–46; and 1946–48.

<sup>101</sup> Cunningham to Linlithgow, 9 Jan. 1942, *Transfer of Power*, vol. I, doc. 8.

<sup>102</sup> Hallett to Linlithgow, 10 May 1942, *Ibid.*, vol. II, doc. 43

<sup>103</sup> Cranborne to Sir Hathorn Hall (Governor of Aden), 8 Aug. 1942, *Ibid.*, vol. II, doc. 463; and Cranborne to Officer Administering the Government of Nyasaland, 8 Aug. 1942, *Ibid.*, doc. 464.

adopted by Congress this suggests that Nehru, particularly, was hoping that an alternative would present itself and that maybe a further attempt at resolving the political impasse would be brokered. None of this was recorded in Churchill's portrayal of events.

Perhaps one reason as to why Churchill's portrayal of 'Quit India' diverged so greatly from the reality was his reluctance, both during and after the war, to face the reality of growing internal pressure from within India herself. In his version of the Cripps mission he had been vituperative about American (namely Roosevelt's) anti-imperialist opinion and advice. He had been highly critical of the Left within his own Coalition Government which, according to his events, was embodied by Cripps himself. Both pressures he thought he had dealt with. But the most humiliating blow for Churchill was the betrayal he felt emanating from India itself. The first substantial omission in Churchill's account was one of the later messages from Linlithgow which recorded how the 'mob violence' of 'Quit India' was so 'rampant over large tracts of the countryside' that Linlithgow was 'by no means confident that we may not see in September a formidable attempt to renew this widespread sabotage of our war effort'.<sup>104</sup> Churchill may have paraphrased Linlithgow's message within his memoirs but he omitted the sentence in which Linlithgow had written that the 'gravity and extent' of the 'Quit India' campaign had been 'so far concealed from the world for reasons of military security'.<sup>105</sup> Little wonder that Churchill did not repeat this in his memoirs, as it would have highlighted how vulnerable India had actually become as a result of the internal unrest associated with 'Quit India'. Furthermore, Linlithgow continued by warning Churchill that:

if we bungle this business we shall damage India irretrievably as a base for future allied operations and as a thoroughfare for U.S. help to China.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Linlithgow to Churchill, 31 Aug. 1942, *Ibid.*, doc. 622.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

Paramount in Linlithgow's text was the gravity of the unrest which was spreading apace throughout India. Fear of hampering the allied war effort was also evident, as was his annoyance with the 'flow of well meaning sentimentalists from the U.S.A. to India'.<sup>107</sup> But what is most striking is the phrase 'if we bungle this business'. In other words, if those responsible for the actual violence and sabotage were not dealt with swiftly, India would not only be lost to the war effort but possibly to the British Empire. This may not have been explicitly written, but it was nonetheless implied. Even as Churchill edited his memoirs, he could not bring himself to admit that Britain had been so close to losing hold of India between August and September 1942.

Another aspect that Churchill's account of 'Quit India' glossed over was the threat of German and Japanese invasion which so troubled some of those who were taking part in the campaign.<sup>108</sup> It was not generally a fear of subjugation to another imperial power that found an outlet in 'Quit India', but the anti-British stance. Churchill had always prized the imperial Victorian belief of imperial protection which, in Churchill's mind, worked both ways (from mother land to colony and back again), but 'Quit India' confronted his concept of the British duty to India and illustrated how fragile, and practically worthless, it had become. Perhaps this is one reason why he does not include this side of 'Quit India'—the pressure from within India was something he could not express. Another aspect of 'Quit India' which Churchill could not express was the British 'ruthless use of force' on the rural communities which had been part of the uprising.<sup>109</sup> Although he concluded that the campaign had hardly registered,<sup>110</sup> it comes as no surprise to learn that 'more than a thousand deaths and over three thousand serious injuries were directly attributed by official account to the riots

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Churchill himself did not admit that the danger of a Japanese invasion of India had passed until 17 Jan. 1944. See Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, Churchill to Ismay, 17 Jan. 1944, Appendix C, p. 600.

<sup>109</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 457.

<sup>110</sup> Stanley Wolpert, *A New History of India* (3<sup>rd</sup> edn, Oxford: OUP, 1989), p. 335.



that followed the Quit India *satyagraha*'.<sup>111</sup> Whilst the number of deaths was low when compared to the deaths which occurred during Partition, a thousand deaths and three thousand injuries illustrate not only the influence that Gandhi exerted but the extent to which the Raj was hated. Naturally Churchill would not mention this motive behind 'Quit India'.

Considering Churchill had been so damning of Roosevelt's opinions on the British in India, he was uncharacteristically even-tempered in this small section. Churchill quoted snippets from a telegram he had sent to Roosevelt on 30 July 1942 in which he wrote that the 'Government of India ... have no doubt of their ability to maintain order'.<sup>112</sup> Churchill wrote that Roosevelt should stress to Chiang Kai-Shek that London did not agree with his assessment of the situation in India.<sup>113</sup> He asserted that as Congress represented 'mainly the intelligentsia of non-fighting Hindu elements' it could neither 'defend India nor raise revolt.'<sup>114</sup> Churchill was at this juncture in the war highly aware of Roosevelt's pro-Chinese, or at least his pro-Chiang Kai-Shek, leanings. With the Japanese attacks on Burma increasing Churchill was also aware that should he ever have to display gratitude towards Chinese troops assisting Allied forces within Burma he would possibly be adding to the possibility of Chiang Kai-Shek claiming China's ancient rights to Upper Burma. Yet Churchill was also aware that if Chiang Kai-Shek attributed more power to Congress than they actually had, it would not ease the task of combating the crisis. By placing it at this juncture in his narrative on the Quit India campaign, Churchill was able to bury how weak the Raj actually was. After all, what if Congress (buoyed up by Chiang Kai-Shek's impression of them) and Japanese forces entered into negotiations? The jewel in the British Empire's crown would be lost forever and this was an outcome which Churchill definitely wished to avoid. Excluding the majority of this exchange with Roosevelt meant that Churchill was able to hide his underestimation of the force and influence that Congress, as well as Gandhi, actually had. In this same telegram Churchill wrote that Congress 'in no way'

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<sup>111</sup> Sarkar, *Modern India*, p. 404.

<sup>112</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 456.

<sup>113</sup> Kimball, *Alliance Emerging*, Churchill to Roosevelt, 30 July 1942, p. 550.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

represented the majority of Indians and that to give in to Congress demands would be a dereliction of the British duty to the majority of Indians and would have a direct and harmful effect on the numbers volunteering for the Indian Army.<sup>115</sup> Once again Churchill exploited the opportunity to persuade Roosevelt that the root cause of the British no-parley during wartime policy in India was the Indian Army and how unreliable and volatile it would possibly become if constitutional issues were forced at the time.

This telegram showed Churchill being forceful and authoritative regarding British policy towards India and especially towards Congress, but it is quite calm and relatively emotionless, on what was always thought to be Churchill's weak spot. This is particularly visible as it ended with Churchill 'earnestly' hoping that Roosevelt would do his best to right Chiang Kai-Shek's opinion and would not lend countenance to them by 'putting pressure' on the British Government to resolve the issue.<sup>116</sup> One reason, perhaps, why Churchill seemed almost conciliatory over the crisis in India, with which Chiang Kai-Shek had been so concerned, was due to the fast approaching first anniversary of the Atlantic Charter. Not wanting to rock an already unstable boat, Churchill asked the President to send him, before it was published, 'the text of any message you are thinking of sending me'. Churchill continued that as they had gone through the wording of 'that famous document', 'line by line together', he would not be able 'to give it a wider interpretation than was agreed at the time'.<sup>117</sup> A year later the Atlantic Charter – or the 'fluffy flapdoodle' as Amery had called it – still had the potential to inflame tensions in London, let alone India, even further.<sup>118</sup>

With the Quit India campaign subject to ruthless control, and supposedly fizzling out, the concurrent saga of the search for a new Viceroy reared its head once more. The need to replace Linlithgow had been brought to Churchill's attention within a month of him becoming Prime Minister, as the increasingly tired Viceroy was 'getting very desperate' as he 'felt he could do nothing and

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., Churchill to Roosevelt, 9 Aug. 1942, p. 557.

<sup>118</sup> John Barnes and David Nicolson (eds), *The Empire At Bay: The Leo Amery Diaries, 1929–1945* (London: Hutchinson, 1988), 14 Aug. 1941, p. 710.

wanted to resign and come home'.<sup>119</sup> A month after the arrest and internment of Gandhi, Nehru, and the majority of the leaders of Congress in August 1942, Linlithgow wrote that Churchill would be 'wise not to press me to go on' after April 1943, and he even listed possible candidates for his replacement—such as Cranbourne, Ormsby-Gore, Lumley, and Sinclair.<sup>120</sup> Despite Linlithgow's pleas to Amery to remind Churchill to make a decision, 'for pity's sake continue',<sup>121</sup> Amery could not get Churchill to decide.<sup>122</sup> Whilst Churchill prevaricated, Linlithgow was approached by others who encouraged him to remain as Viceroy beyond his already extended term. The Nizam of Hyderabad, Mir Usman Ali Khan, wrote that whilst it was no business of his to make suggestions as to who should be the next Viceroy, whomever his successor was, he would not have as equally a 'wide experience and deep insight into the affairs' of India as Linlithgow, and that any 'new man' would almost definitely be 'a stranger to Indian conditions'.<sup>123</sup>

The fourth and fifth volumes of Churchill's memoirs cover this period so one might expect some reference to the weighty question of who would replace Linlithgow. Yet in the fourth volume Churchill made no mention of the quandary he found himself in over this matter. The first mention that Churchill made to either the need to replace Linlithgow, or even the decision to appoint Wavell as his successor, appears in the fifth volume, when he wrote how he had informed Linlithgow of the decision to 'set up a South-East Asia Command, with Mountbatten as Supreme Commander' and that Wavell's appointment to the Viceroyalty was going to be publicised on 25 August 1943.<sup>124</sup> India, like all issues east of Suez, was virtually ignored by Churchill in his memoirs if it would have a detrimental affect on his post-war reputation and standing. It therefore comes as no surprise that Churchill favoured directing the reader towards 'what the Western Powers may justly regard as the supreme climax of the war'—

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 9 June 1940, p. 621.

<sup>120</sup> Linlithgow to Amery, 21 Sept. 1942, *Transfer of Power*, vol. III, doc. 1.

<sup>121</sup> Linlithgow to Amery, 18 Oct. 1942, Ibid., doc. 105.

<sup>122</sup> Amery to Linlithgow, 17 Oct. 1942, Ibid., doc. 102.

<sup>123</sup> Khan to Linlithgow, 1 Nov. 1942, Ibid., doc. 130.

<sup>124</sup> Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, p. 82.

Operation Overlord.<sup>125</sup> In private, Churchill claimed that he had never 'had to solve a more puzzling appointment'.<sup>126</sup> Yet in his memoirs he was uncharacteristically silent.

A year after Pearl Harbor Churchill maintained that, although it was still the most inopportune moment to replace Linlithgow, he would 'try to come to a decision'.<sup>127</sup> But not until after he had wondered whether Linlithgow, having already extended his tenure in April 1941, would 'be willing to stay on for another year, or at least for another six months'.<sup>128</sup> Churchill emphasised that 'it would be better not to have a new man feeling his feet at such a juncture' and that 'this is a singularly bad moment from every point of view to have to make a change'.<sup>129</sup> Churchill commented that he would need time, if Linlithgow would not carry on as Viceroy for another six to twelve months, 'in order that all alternatives can be weighed'.<sup>130</sup> Linlithgow's decision to extend his term had not been an easy one, but he understood why it was necessary.<sup>131</sup> The King's approval for yet another extension to Linlithgow's term as Viceroy was granted, this time until October 1943, and the quest for a new Viceroy had to begin in earnest.<sup>132</sup>

Although Churchill was the ultimate arbiter of Linlithgow's successor, it was Amery who was 'preoccupied' with this task which was complicated 'by the close interest being taken in the new appointment by the Prime Minister himself'.<sup>133</sup> For instance, on 18 November 1942, Amery and Churchill travelled together to Harrow to attend the annual School Concert. One historian notes how the

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 557.

<sup>126</sup> CHAR 20/112/81: Churchill to Linlithgow, 9 June 1943.

<sup>127</sup> Churchill to Amery, 14 Nov. 1942, *Transfer of Power*, vol. III, doc. 184.

<sup>128</sup> CHAR 20/84/57: Churchill to Linlithgow, 3 Dec. 1942.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> CHAR 20/84/65: Linlithgow to Churchill, 4 Dec. 1942.

<sup>132</sup> CHAR 20/84/93: Churchill to Linlithgow, 6 Dec. 1942.

<sup>133</sup> David Faber, *Speaking for England: Leo, Julian and John Amery, The Tragedy of a Political Family* (London: Pocket Books, 2007), p. 1.

conversation in the car on the way down centred, as it had done between them for some weeks, on the appointment of a New viceroy for India, Churchill surprising his Secretary of State with a new name, that of Dick Law, himself the son of a former Conservative Prime Minister.<sup>134</sup>

Churchill was not only aware of the increasing need to replace Linlithgow, but was also surprising Amery with his seemingly random suggestions. In reality, Churchill was struggling to find a replacement that would be as amenable as Linlithgow.<sup>135</sup> He continually prevaricated over who was the most suitable replacement to such an extent that, at times, Amery was almost reduced to begging him to make up his mind: 'May I urge you most earnestly not to postpone any longer a decision on the succession to Linlithgow?',<sup>136</sup> and, 'we really must come to a decision'.<sup>137</sup> Amery suggested that the choice was between Anderson and Attlee and that he (Amery) was 'increasingly disposed to urge the latter'.<sup>138</sup> Attlee, as far as Amery could see, was well versed in Indian matters (Attlee had been part of the Simon Commission) and had 'no sentimental illusions as to any dramatic shortcut to its solution'.<sup>139</sup> Appointing Attlee as Viceroy would mollify the Labour contingent in the British Government, as well

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<sup>134</sup> Faber, *Speaking for England*, p. 4.

<sup>135</sup> For the close working relationship between Linlithgow and Churchill see Gowher Rizvi, *Linlithgow and India: A Study of British Policy and the Political Impasse in India, 1936–1943* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978); and Nicholas Owen, 'The Cripps mission of 1942: A reinterpretation', *JICH*, 30/1 (2002).

<sup>136</sup> Amery to Churchill, 13 Nov. 1942, *Transfer of Power*, vol. III, doc. 172.

<sup>137</sup> Amery to Churchill, 3 Dec. 1942, *Ibid.*, vol. III, doc. 238.

<sup>138</sup> Amery to Churchill, 13 Nov. 1942, *Ibid.*, vol. III, doc. 172.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

as illustrate how seriously Britain was taking the Indian problem and finally, Amery thought that Attlee could be more easily spared than Anderson.<sup>140</sup>

The search for a new Viceroy was a long and, at times, desperate one. By the end of 1942, Churchill had begun to 'question', but not make 'definite proposals' towards, various candidates.<sup>141</sup> One such candidate was Sir Miles Lampson, who replied that, whilst he fully appreciated that this was just a question rather than an offer, he was 'greatly flattered' and that there was 'nothing I should like more'.<sup>142</sup> His questioning of Lampson revealed how desperate Churchill had become as, in the previous month, he had written to Smuts and commented that he doubted 'the suitability of Lampson on grounds of physical vigour, age, and [his] long stay in [the] Egyptian climate'.<sup>143</sup> In the same communiqué to Smuts, and possibly without realising it, Churchill accurately summed up his problem—since his own attitudes towards India were well known throughout India (let alone the empire) he needed the potential Viceroy to be 'free from any political past as regards India', and to act as a Churchillian counterbalance.<sup>144</sup>

The list of suitable candidates had to be shorn of those men who were not physically up to the task, and those who had no political past regarding India. Other names included Colville, Cranborne, Lumley, Wilfrid Greene, Lyttelton, Anderson, and Eden but, considering the criteria, the list of suitable candidates was naturally quite short.<sup>145</sup> Amery believed that the solution to the 'supreme problem' of India,

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<sup>140</sup> Gott's death in early August 1942, meant that Anderson filled his vacancy which implied that, similar to Eden, Anderson was indispensable elsewhere and so out of the running for the Viceroyalty as far as Churchill was concerned.

<sup>141</sup> CHAR 20/84/32: Churchill to Lampson, 2 Dec. 1942.

<sup>142</sup> CHAR 20/84/49: Lampson to Churchill, 2 Dec. 1942.

<sup>143</sup> CHAR 20/83/123: Churchill to Smuts, 25 Nov. 1942

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> Although Eden's name was mentioned for the Viceroyalty he would not have been seriously considered as Churchill, before setting off for Washington in June 1942, wrote to the King that should he die whilst abroad, the King 'should entrust the formation of a new Government to Mr. Anthony Eden, ... the

depends enormously on personality, ... on a Viceroy who is equally determined to keep India within the Empire and to show that he genuinely sympathises with Indian nationalism.<sup>146</sup>

Amery even went on to suggest that he himself had the 'essential qualification' for the post should all other alternatives be dismissed.<sup>147</sup> Churchill quickly rejected Amery's offer and wrote that although he appreciated, and understood, Amery's 'public-spirited motive in making it', he was needed in London.<sup>148</sup> This vital criterion became Churchill's stumbling block. He was not prepared to send anyone whom he either needed in London or relied on in the field to replace Linlithgow as he was 'loth to disturb the smooth-running poise of the War Cabinet'.<sup>149</sup> Such a list of necessary qualifications meant that one of the final two candidates was Lampson, whom Churchill had already partially discounted. Linlithgow agreed to a final extension, although he encouraged Amery to 'open fire at No. 10 not a moment later than May 1<sup>st</sup>, and keep shooting till you get what we all so much want'.<sup>150</sup> After further consultations with Linlithgow and Amery, Churchill agreed that there was one man who was suitable as he had a 'great name, knows the situation on your Council, and has a much broader outlook than most soldiers'—Field-Marshal Archibald Wavell.<sup>151</sup>

Churchill had previously written that Wavell was, above all, a soldier. The question is why make a soldier a Viceroy? Did Churchill believe that India was going to become even more troublesome to him and the Allied war effort? Did his experience of 'Quit India' and its violence suggest that a military hand,

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outstanding Minister in the largest political party in the House'. Churchill to King George VI, 16 June 1942, in Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 337.

<sup>146</sup> Amery to Churchill, 1 Dec. 1942, *Transfer of Power*, vol. III, doc. 234.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Churchill to Amery, 1 Dec. 1942, Ibid., doc. 235.

<sup>149</sup> CHAR 20/112/81: Churchill to Linlithgow, 9 June 1943.

<sup>150</sup> Linlithgow to Amery, 8 Dec. 1942, *Transfer of Power*, vol. III, doc. 263.

<sup>151</sup> CHAR 20/112/81: Churchill to Linlithgow, 9 June 1943.

adept at fulfilling military commands, needed to be on show at the very top of the Raj in India? Was this why he needed to put a soldier into a diplomatic position? If so, this possibly explains why Churchill would certainly have needed to hide his reasoning behind the long search for a new Viceroy as it would have tainted the image he had cultured of being a benevolent imperial master. There is however, another reason as to why Churchill omitted the reasoning behind his choice of Wavell from his memoirs.

As early as June 1941, Churchill had become disillusioned with Wavell. He wanted Auchinleck to go to Egypt as he believed that only Auchinleck would 'infuse a new energy and precision into the defence of the Nile Valley'.<sup>152</sup> Whilst Churchill described Wavell as 'our most distinguished General', he immediately followed this with 'nevertheless I feel he is tired'.<sup>153</sup> Although Churchill had praised Wavell in February 1942 after the collapse of the defence of Java and the A.B.D.A. Command and had 'admired the composure and firmness of mind' with which he had 'faced the cataract of disaster which had been assigned to him', this admiration had turned, by the following September, into impatience and annoyance.<sup>154</sup> Churchill was obviously highly irritated by Wavell as his minute to Brendan Bracken (Minister of Information) revealed. He questioned what the arrangements for 'controlling broadcasts by British Service Officers in the overseas Empire, such as that ... by Wavell?'<sup>155</sup> Churchill's annoyance with Wavell was clear:

a speech by a Minister not in the War Cabinet on such a topic would not be broadcast without reference to me, and I cannot agree to any lesser control outside this country.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> CHAR 20/40/14: Churchill to Linlithgow, 20 June 1941.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 128.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., Churchill to Brendan Bracken (Minister of Information), 2 Sept. 1942, Appendix C, p. 789.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p. 790.



Churchill repeated his concern over Wavell's so-called tiredness when he wrote that, 'in the opinion of Brooke and Ismay, Wavell has aged considerably under the many strains he has borne during this war'.<sup>157</sup> Typically Churchill was expressing his own opinion, albeit in a watered-down form, by using someone else's words. Churchill wrote that he would be 'very sorry to leave Wavell unemployed, as he has justly acquired a high reputation'.<sup>158</sup> But this appears to be disingenuous of Churchill's true opinion of Wavell as he immediately followed this sentence with, 'it would be best for all interests if Wavell could succeed ... as Governor-General of Australia'.<sup>159</sup> In short, Churchill wanted Wavell as far away as possible and had a 'desire to dispense with Wavell, who ... [was] tired and lacking drive'.<sup>160</sup> Attlee advised Churchill that moving Wavell to Australia would cause difficulties. MacArthur would think it 'an attempt to infringe on American control in that sphere' and it would 'in effect be a shelving of Wavell from active service in the war'.<sup>161</sup> Yet Churchill's decision was made and Wavell was told to pack. In his diary, Wavell acknowledged that whilst he was surprised by the appointment he would nonetheless treat it as a military posting, and ensure that he did the job to the best of his abilities.<sup>162</sup> Even though Churchill wrote that he was sure that 'His Majesty's choice will be acclaimed, and that his affairs will not suffer in your hands',<sup>163</sup> Wavell supposed that this was nothing more than the usual political niceties. Wavell realistically noted that as he was preparing to depart for India, he was sure Churchill had regretted making him Viceroy as 'he has always really disliked me and mistrusted me, and probably ... regrets having appointed me'.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> CHAR 20/128/55: Churchill to Attlee, 29 May 1943.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Amery to Linlithgow, 8 June 1943, *Transfer of Power*, vol. III, doc. 764.

<sup>161</sup> Attlee to Churchill, 30 May 1943, Ibid., doc. 747.

<sup>162</sup> Penderel Moon (ed.), *Wavell, The Viceroy's Journal* (Karachi: OUP, 1974), summary of 1943, p. 45.

<sup>163</sup> CHAR 20/93B/189: Churchill to Wavell, 17 June 1943.

<sup>164</sup> Moon (ed.), *Wavell*, 8 Oct. 1943, p. 23.

The regret that Wavell had detected was obvious when Churchill wrote to Amery that 'no exceptional limitation should be placed upon Sir Archibald Wavell's tenure as Viceroy'.<sup>165</sup> What needs to be questioned is whether Churchill thought that sending a military man (Wavell) into a political situation (India) would cause further chaos, or perhaps calm matters. Although this point is speculative, one fact is not—Churchill wanted Wavell as far away from himself as possible. Even though Churchill commented that Wavell's appointment had 'been so well received', it was, for Churchill, a radical departure from the relationship he had with Linlithgow.<sup>166</sup> In Linlithgow, Churchill had almost an extension of his self in India. Linlithgow's policy of lying back and not making the first move, echoed Churchill's preferred stance regarding India.<sup>167</sup> The same could not be said of Churchill and Wavell, and the difference between the two men became obvious at the farewell dinner that was held in honour of Wavell's imminent departure as the new Viceroy of India.<sup>168</sup>

Churchill was the first to speak. He acknowledged the 'long and arduous tour of duty' that Linlithgow had made.<sup>169</sup> He then insidiously warned Wavell that as air travel had progressed it meant the Viceroy could now 'come home almost in a few hours' which would 'put himself into the closest contact with the Executive Government here'.<sup>170</sup> In short, Wavell would be kept on short, tight reins. Having 'picked a great soldier' whose 'name will live in the history of this

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<sup>165</sup> CHUR 2/43A/34: Churchill to Amery, 20 June 1943.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Robin James Moore, *Endgames of Empire: Studies of Britain's Indian Problem* (Delhi: OUP, 1988), p. 87.

<sup>168</sup> CHAR 20/99B/172–81: Speeches at the farewell dinner in honour of Field Marshal the Viscount Wavell before leaving to take up his post as Viceroy, 6 Oct. 1943. The differences between Wavell's and Churchill's views on India were in fact so obvious that Churchill was advised by Amery, never to have the speech published unless 'certain omissions' were made. See CHAR 20/99B/182: Amery through John Martin (Churchill's Principal Private Secretary) to Churchill, 7 Oct. 1943.

<sup>169</sup> CHAR 20/99B/172: Churchill, 6 Oct. 1943.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

war', Churchill recalled how Wavell's generalship had filled a grim period of the war with 'a series of brilliant episodes'.<sup>171</sup> He talked of the 'overwhelming blows' which Wavell had faced as the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the short lived ABDA command, and how Wavell had 'faced his task with the greatest courage and tenacity' and had borne his lot 'in a manner which enhanced the respect his fellow-countrymen felt for him'.<sup>172</sup> Churchill spoke of the 'time of crisis' in India into which Wavell was being plunged, and spoke of the hope he had for Wavell being able to 'wield his pen with almost equal effort to the way in which he wields the sword'.<sup>173</sup>

Only two of the five pages of Churchill's speech are given over to Wavell. Churchill sandwiched three pages of his views on India, the current situation in India, and the history of British achievement in India in between his complimentary (albeit perfunctory, as well as cautionary) comments towards Wavell. He realised that he had to be circumspect on what he had to say about India, as his 'views on the subject are no more fashionable than were my views on the dangers we encountered before the war'.<sup>174</sup> Although Churchill acknowledged that he had to pick his steps 'with reasonable caution', it did not stop him from airing how he harboured 'subdued resentment about the way in which the world has failed to recognise the great achievements of Britain in India'.<sup>175</sup> The audience obviously agreed with him as cries of 'hear, hear' were forthcoming.<sup>176</sup> Churchill described India, under British rule, as a 'great calm area' where 'teeming people have not suffered the evils which have been almost the common and universal lot of man'.<sup>177</sup> He claimed that 'famines have passed away – until the horrors of war and the dislocations of war have given us a taste of them again'.<sup>178</sup> But what caused Churchill 'so much vexation and sorrow' was

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<sup>171</sup> CHAR 20/99B/173: Churchill, 6 Oct. 1943.

<sup>172</sup> CHAR 20/99B/174: Churchill, 6 Oct. 1943.

<sup>173</sup> CHAR 20/99B/176: Churchill, 6 Oct. 1943.

<sup>174</sup> CHAR 20/99B/174: Churchill, 6 Oct. 1943.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> CHAR 20/99B/174: 6 Oct. 1943.

<sup>177</sup> CHAR 20/99B/175: Churchill, 6 Oct. 1943.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

that the 'great achievements' of the British in India (a rising population, a lessening of famine and pestilence, an un-corrupt judiciary, an un-biased court system, increased industry and transport links) were 'not understood' in many parts of the world.<sup>179</sup> In short, he called for a 'truer recognition' of what the British had achieved.<sup>180</sup> He prayed that if the day should come when Britain relinquished her Indian responsibilities and 'vanish[ed] from the scene', then the history of the Raj would be viewed as a 'Golden Age' and one of which Britain ought to be proud.<sup>181</sup>

Considering that the dinner was being held in Wavell's honour before his departure to become the new Viceroy of India, his speech contained comparatively little about his appointment. He spoke of how Churchill's leadership had given a 'tang and a savour that no ordinary leadership could have done'.<sup>182</sup> Wavell did 'not pretend that the Prime Minister' was 'an easy man to serve', nor did he pretend that Churchill had not doubted his ability at the beginning of the war.<sup>183</sup> Wavell praised Churchill's dynamism and, possibly in an attempt to lighten the mood, wondered whether 'anyone had made a calculation of the Prime Minister's energy in terms of man power per cigar'.<sup>184</sup> Wavell declared that when the history of the war was recounted it would say that 'no better or bolder use of [the] ... limited resources could possibly have been made'.<sup>185</sup> He also mentioned the 'courage of my troops, British, Dominion and Indian', something which set him apart from Churchill (both at the farewell dinner and later) and something which emphasized how he was first, and foremost, a military man and one who knew his troops.<sup>186</sup> Perhaps this partly answers why Wavell, out of the limited names put forward for the post of Viceroy, was chosen for the post. Not as a 'stopgap' Viceroy but because he was

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> CHAR 20/99B/176: Churchill, 6 Oct. 1943.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> CHAR 20/99B/177: Wavell, 6 Oct. 1943.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> CHAR 20/99B/177-178: Wavell, 6 Oct. 1943.

<sup>185</sup> CHAR 20/99B/178: Wavell, 6 Oct. 1943.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

a military man, who knew the mentality of the troops under his command; especially the Indian and Dominion troops.<sup>187</sup> Upon his being offered the Viceroyalty, Wavell jocularly referred to Churchill having 'mastered the tactics of the 'Blitzkrieg', and knew how to apply them'.<sup>188</sup> This suggested that Wavell really had been given no choice. It was the Viceroyalty or nothing.

Wavell spoke of his 'three difficult but most extraordinarily interesting years' and predicted that his forthcoming time in India would be no less difficult.<sup>189</sup> However, he emphasised his time in India would be 'just as important ... for the future of our Commonwealth and for the peace of the world.'<sup>190</sup> This set Wavell apart from Churchill in that it directly opposed Churchill's antiquated belief that the British Raj would continue to rule in India for many years to come. (Throughout Churchill's lyrical waxing over India and the Golden Age he had made no mention of self-government or independence for India.) In fact, Wavell clearly talked of the 'goodwill towards India' and of the 'general desire to see Indians managing their own affairs'.<sup>191</sup>

Wavell likened the greater responsibility of Indian self-management to climbing a mountain. When approaching a treacherous summit 'choosing footholds and handholds' and 'cutting steps in slippery ice' become ever more important.<sup>192</sup> The ice, to which Wavell was referring, was the political climate in India and this could not have gone unnoticed by the Prime Minister and his fellow diners. Wavell said that he totally agreed that the first aim was to 'defeat the enemy', and to maintain law and order within India itself.<sup>193</sup> He recognized that whilst 'some quarters' believed that 'political progress in India during the war should not be attempted', he did 'not think that that should necessarily bar political progress if progress is possible'.<sup>194</sup> However, he quickly added that

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<sup>187</sup> Robin James Moore, 'The Stopgap Viceroy', *South Asian Review*, 7:1 (1973).

<sup>188</sup> CHAR 20/99B/179: Wavell, 6 Oct. 1943.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> CHAR 20/99B/180: Wavell, 6 Oct. 1943.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

whilst the Government of India was capable of maintaining law and order and had proved itself to be so, it did 'not necessarily mean that it [was] the only or even the best possible Government'.<sup>195</sup> Wavell said that the British had to be 'prepared to take risks if necessary, and possibly to resort to unorthodox mountaineering methods'.<sup>196</sup> Finally he concluded with his vision of India:

an India at peace within herself, a partner in our great Commonwealth of Nations, mother of a prosperous people, a shield for peace in the East, [and] a busy market trade.<sup>197</sup>

With these concluding remarks, the new Viceroy set himself even further apart from Churchill and the old-school vision of India as the jewel in the British Empire's crown. For Wavell, India would be better served, by herself as well as by Britain, if she was part of the Commonwealth, but he said that this was his vision and a 'far-distant vision' at that.<sup>198</sup>

Wavell's impression that Churchill regretted appointing him proved to be correct. On the day of his departure for India, Wavell wrote that Churchill had not only been 'menacing and unpleasant', but had also 'indicated that only over his dead body would any approach to Gandhi take place'.<sup>199</sup> Both Linlithgow and Amery had issued warnings about the problems the new Viceroy would face. Linlithgow warned that Wavell would find himself in 'an intolerable position',<sup>200</sup> not just from within India, where his 'previous experience will not be of great assistance to him', but from external forces such as Churchill.<sup>201</sup> Amery warned

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> CHAR 20/99B/181: Wavell, 6 Oct. 1943.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Moon (ed.), *Wavell*, 8 Oct. 1943, p. 23.

<sup>200</sup> Linlithgow to Amery, 18 Oct. 1942, *Transfer of Power*, vol. III, doc. 105.

<sup>201</sup> Nicholas Mansergh and Esmond W.R. Lumby (eds), *The Transfer of Power, 1942–1947: Volume IV, The Bengal Famine and the New Viceroyalty, 15 June*

that over the problem of sterling balances with India, Churchill would doubtlessly 'preserve his right to be able to raise the matter again' but he could not imagine 'a new Viceroy being prepared to take on the business of poking the animal into life on top of all the trouble he is going to inherit'.<sup>202</sup>

Churchill's choice of Wavell for the Viceroyalty led only to further confrontations: not only between Churchill and Wavell, between the Viceroyalty and Whitehall, but also between Congress and the Muslim League (as Wavell inadvertently attempted to resolve their conflicts which, in turn, pitted him against London).<sup>203</sup> Wavell already had an extensive knowledge of the personalities and politics of India, and whilst he tried to be an effective communicator and conciliator he was, first and foremost, a soldier. Amery once remarked that the success of the new Viceroy depended upon his personality and, since Wavell was not 'easy to serve' as his 'silences were hard to interpret' and he was 'so reserved', it appeared that Wavell's success was therefore not assured.<sup>204</sup> Churchill made no mention of this reality within his memoirs and he also failed to mention the real reason why he wanted Wavell so far away. In a far less overt way than he dealt with the troublesome Cripps, Churchill dealt with Wavell. In the same breath that he used to confirm that he would put forward Wavell's name to the King, Churchill confirmed that Auchinleck would become Commander-in-Chief in India 'with the clear intention of forming a separate East Asia Command of the highest importance'.<sup>205</sup> The reality behind Churchill's appointment of Wavell as Viceroy was clear: Churchill had become impatient and disillusioned with Wavell, and believed that he was hindering operations in the Far East which, for Churchill, reinforced the American criticism of British strategic policy in Burma. Churchill's first reference to this re-shuffle of

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1943–31 August 1944 (London: HMSO, 1973), Linlithgow to Amery, 19 June 1943, doc. 13.

<sup>202</sup> Amery to Linlithgow, 30 Oct. 1942, *Transfer of Power*, vol. III, doc. 128.

<sup>203</sup> Irial Glynn, "An Untouchable in the Presence of Brahmins", Lord Wavell's Disastrous Relationship with Whitehall During His Time as Viceroy to India, 1943–1947', *MAS*, 41/3 (2007).

<sup>204</sup> Bond (ed.), *Chief of Staff: II*, p. 95.

<sup>205</sup> CHAR 20/112/82: Churchill to Linlithgow, 9 June 1943.

command was when he wrote that it was due to the 'profound dissatisfaction',<sup>206</sup> both in Washington and in London, about the 'lack of vim in the recent operations in Burma'.<sup>207</sup> Churchill hid behind the reality of the situation as he wished Wavell removed from command and his portrayal of the reshuffle allowed him to hide behind the American pseudo-encouragement of it. Even though it was thought that Wavell, 'time and time again' had 'been handed out a raw deal ... without a golden wand to wave', Churchill's quixotic and mercurial favouritism of some generals and commanders over others was apparent.<sup>208</sup> He wanted Wavell out of the way and he wanted Auchinleck, one of his favourites, in the lead.

Another radical explanation as to why Churchill omitted to make reference to his long and hard decision on who should become Viceroy, was to hide his own role in the steady erosion of British power in India. By giving Wavell another impossible task to perform, he had inevitably set the ball rolling for a quick and hasty imperial retreat from India. After all his machinations in the re-shuffling of command posts, so that a tired and troublesome Wavell would be posted far away from him, and no matter whether he viewed Wavell's Viceroyalty as nothing more than a stop-gap solution,<sup>209</sup> it was Churchill's fatal and least imperially conscious decision.<sup>210</sup> Only one man could replace Wavell as Viceroy—Mountbatten. And he managed to do what Wavell could not: he

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<sup>206</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 715.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 716.

<sup>208</sup> Bond (ed.), *Chief of Staff: II*, p. 94.

<sup>209</sup> For details on how Wavell's tenure as Viceroy was not expected to go beyond an unusually short three years see: Turnbull to Bridges, 19 June 1943, *Transfer of Power*, vol. IV, doc. 10; Churchill to Amery, 20 June 1943, *Ibid.*, vol. IV, doc. 14; and Turnbull note, 21 June 1943, *Ibid.*, vol. IV, doc. 16.

<sup>210</sup> Perhaps thinking of Attlee's experience (Attlee had been elected as the leader of the Labour Party in 1935, supposedly as a stop-gap, yet he remained in that position for twenty years), Churchill thought that plugging the Viceroyalty gap with Wavell would stem the call for total Indian independence. It was a decision which Churchill would regret.



hastened the timetable of the British withdrawal from India, and 'wound up the British Raj with the full agreement of all parties'.<sup>211</sup>

The differences between the two men, which had already been voiced at Wavell's farewell dinner, became even more pronounced when Wavell's efforts to relieve the effects of the Bengal famine set him on a collision path with Churchill. When Churchill had been a subaltern in India at the end of the nineteenth century, he began to refine his political opinions by annotating old copies of the *Annual Register*. One of the subjects in the *Annual Register* of 1874, was that of the Indian famine of 1873 to 1874, The then Viceroy, Lord Northbrook,\* had refused to stop exporting Indian grain even though it was desperately needed to sustain its own population.<sup>212</sup> Churchill wrote that Northbrook 'was right in refusing to prohibit grain exports' as he was 'opposed to any interference by Government with private trade'.<sup>213</sup> He went on to note that Government interference could only be justified if there were 'distinct proof that prices were *artificially* raised by an association of merchants'.<sup>214</sup> Writing to his mother two years later, Churchill noted that the autumn crops in Bangalore had failed as the rains had 'been inadequate' and that the winter crop too looked as if it would also fail.<sup>215</sup> But these observations were just that—observations. Churchill seemed to be more preoccupied with the way that the inevitable famine was liable to be accompanied by 'riots and discontent'.<sup>216</sup> He appeared indifferent to the starvation, but not to the way that rioting and discontent would reflect badly on the imperial prestige of the British Raj. Churchill's indifference to a starving population was still evident not only under the pressure of wartime conditions but when he came to write his memoirs. He had undoubtedly been

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<sup>211</sup> Moon (ed.), *Wavell*, p. xi.

<sup>212</sup> See David Arnold, 'Looting, Grain Riots and Government Policy in South India 1918', in *Past and Present*, 84 (1979), pp. 111–45.

<sup>213</sup> Randolph S. Churchill (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: Companion Volume 1: Part 2, 1896–1900* (London: Heinemann, 1967), annotated notes in the *Annual Register*, p. 760.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, Churchill to Lady Jennie Churchill, 14 Oct. 1896, p. 688.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

aware of the prospect of famine in India from mid-1942 onwards. The area most affected was Bengal where, during the 'terrible summer and autumn of 1943', between one and a half to three million people died of starvation.<sup>217</sup> It comes as no surprise to discover that Churchill made little to no mention of the Bengal famine within the main text of his memoirs. The handful of instances which refer to it are tucked away in the appendices to volumes four and five.

Two days after Wavell's name had been submitted to the King, Sir John Herbert, the Governor of Bengal, had informed Linlithgow of his 'chief worry' over the 'question of food supplies'.<sup>218</sup> He noted that whilst a 'food drive' had increased stock levels he needed a 'further influx of rice and paddy to start a general decline in prices and thus bring further supplies on to the market'.<sup>219</sup> By September Linlithgow warned that there was liable to be a 'net domestic cereal ... deficiency of about 1 ¼ million tons' for the year and an even greater deficiency for the following year.<sup>220</sup> The Japanese occupation of Burma had cut off what were once plentiful supplies of Burmese rice to India. The logistical problems long associated with war, such as problems with transport and distribution systems (let alone the added requirement of feeding the troops) only exacerbated the situation. Normal market forces turned into wartime market forces, and were accompanied by stockpiling and ever-increasing prices.<sup>221</sup>

Upon his arrival in Delhi, there seemed little that Wavell could do to solve or at least alleviate the 'widespread distress and suffering' that was caused by the famine.<sup>222</sup> Wavell was shocked by these conditions, but he was equally shocked by the apparent 'gross mismanagement and deliberate profiteering' of

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<sup>217</sup> Sarkar, *Modern India*, p. 406. Whilst Bengal was arguably worst hit by the famine, famine conditions affected a wide tract of India especially Madras.

<sup>218</sup> Herbert to Linlithgow, 19 June 1943, *Transfer of Power*, vol. IV, doc. 12.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> Linlithgow to Amery, 18 Sept. 1943, *Ibid.*, vol. IV, doc. 121.

<sup>221</sup> Madhusree Mukerjee, *Churchill's Secret War: The British Empire and the Ravaging of India During World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 2010); and Richard Stevenson, *Bengal Tiger and British Lion: An Account of the Bengal Famine of 1943* (New York: iUniverse, 2005).

<sup>222</sup> Moon (ed.), *Wavell*, 29 Oct. 1943, p. 35.

the Bengal government.<sup>223</sup> He remarked in his diary that, whilst the famine was 'not as gruesome' as Congress had led him to believe, it was 'grim enough to make official complacency surprising'.<sup>224</sup> The diary entries that Wavell made, during his first year as Viceroy, were overwhelmingly concerned with his efforts to increase shipping levels of cereal and grain supplies to India.<sup>225</sup> Increasingly concerned by the distinct lack of 'extreme urgency' about the famine which he encountered in various British officials in India, he requested that Amery despatched a 'first class man' whose leadership was 'inspiring' and who had the 'drive of a first class administrator of wide experience'.<sup>226</sup> Amery estimated to the House of Commons that in Calcutta alone, the death rate from the famine was approximately 1,000 people a week.<sup>227</sup> Two weeks later it was suggested that the India Office should 'use Rutherford's estimated figure of two thousand deaths a week'.<sup>228</sup> Wavell repeated his calls for an increase in shipping.

Churchill virtually ignored the Bengal famine in his memoirs. Possibly because, as with all Indian matters, he held strong opinions—opinions which would not be conducive to his post-war persona. On the day that Wavell was sworn in to the Privy Council, and after lunching with the King and Queen, he attended a Cabinet meeting at which Churchill spoke 'scathingly' about the Indian food crisis.<sup>229</sup> According to Wavell, Churchill thought that it was 'more important to save the Greeks and liberated countries from starvation than the Indians' and that he exhibited a distinct 'reluctance either to provide shipping or to reduce stocks in this country'. The Indian war effort was paramount, in both Churchill's and Wavell's eyes, but whereas Churchill differentiated between those who were in rural districts and those 'actually fighting or making munitions or working some particular railway', Wavell did not.<sup>230</sup> Churchill could not

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<sup>223</sup> Sarkar, *Modern India*, p. 406.

<sup>224</sup> Moon (ed.), *Wavell*, 29 Oct. 1943, p. 35.

<sup>225</sup> Moon (ed.), *Wavell*, pp. 32–108.

<sup>226</sup> Wavell to Amery, 29 Oct. 1943, *Transfer of Power*, vol. IV, doc. 192.

<sup>227</sup> Hansard (HC), (series 5) vol. 392, col. 1078 (14 Oct. 1943).

<sup>228</sup> Dibdin to Turnbull, 28 Oct. 1943, *Transfer of Power*, vol. IV, doc. 191.

<sup>229</sup> Moon (ed.), *Wavell*, 24 Sept. 1943, p. 19.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*

reveal this as it directly contradicted the image he had been nurturing of himself as the benevolent imperial ruler. During his period in the 'political wilderness' in the 1930s, Churchill had exaggerated his imperialism and had vaunted the notion of the British imperialists 'duty' to the weak and vulnerable subjects in the empire, let alone in India. Although India was independent by the time the fifth volume of memoirs was published (in 1952), his image of a benevolent imperialist had to be maintained if he were to secure the existence of the British Commonwealth. He had once said that the India Act of 1935 was a 'monstrous monument of sham built by pygmies'.<sup>231</sup> He needed to ensure that his own criticism could not come back to haunt him and the new Commonwealth.

In his memoirs Churchill recalled how there had been 'a world shortage of many important foodstuffs', and how anxious he had become over the possible shortfall.<sup>232</sup> But he had not been referring to food supplies for the British Empire, least of all India—he was concerned with post-liberation European food supplies.<sup>233</sup> He also suggested that Lord Woolton (the Minister of Food) and Lord Leathers (the Minister of War Transport) should ensure that 'shipping space in vessels returning from North Africa' should be used to bring back 'oranges and lemons from the Mediterranean area' to Britain.<sup>234</sup> A sensible use of shipping but one which reveals his preoccupation with British food supplies rather than those of other, far more desperate, imperial subjects. This is further evidenced when he mentioned the surplus of grain in Britain, with which he advised the Lord President of the Council to,

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<sup>231</sup> Robert Rhodes James (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches, Volume V, 1928-1935* (New York: Chelsea House, 1974), 'India—The Betrayal', BBC Broadcast, London, 30 Jan. 1935, p. 5467. The word 'sham' was originally transcribed as 'shame'.

<sup>232</sup> Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, Churchill to Hugh Dalton (President of the Board of Trade) and Lord Woolton (Minister of Food), 30 Sept. 1943, Appendix C, p. 586.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, Churchill to Lord Woolton (Minister of Food) and Lord Leathers (Minister of War Transport), 27 Sept. 1943, Appendix C, p. 586.

do a little more for the domestic poultry-keeper. He can usually provide or collect scrap to balance the grain, so that we could get more eggs for a given amount than if it were handed to the commercial producer.<sup>235</sup>

Churchill argued that by increasing domestic egg production it would 'save shipping and labour'.<sup>236</sup>

Time and time again Churchill justified to Roosevelt why he was not prepared to discuss constitutional change for India during wartime. He claimed that it would have a detrimental effect on the Indian Army's ability to fight. Nothing was to hamper the war effort. Similarly he used the horrific circumstance of the Bengal famine to explain why the lack of progress in the South-East Asian theatre had been so slow. Churchill recommended that the 'draft Order of the Day would be a very good text' for Mountbatten to read when visiting troops and that he himself would refer to it when he next spoke to the Commons 'in terms like these: "The climactic conditions, the famine and the floods, have greatly set back all possibilities in this theatre"'.<sup>237</sup> For a man who portrayed himself as a benevolent imperialist—one who looked after those who had no representation—this was a damning indictment of how low Churchill's opinion of India had become by the end of 1943. Its inclusion in the memoirs can arguably be judged as an editorial oversight.

Apart from the above instance, Churchill's indifference towards the general Indian population is completely absent from his memoirs. One possible reason is that as he had always referenced how the war effort, especially the Indian Army, would be radically affected if India's future status were to be discussed during wartime, it would have shown how insincere he actually was. Mountbatten offered 10 percent of naval shipping in order to bring in the desperately needed supplies of grain and cereals, but Churchill vetoed this and redeployed the proffered 10 percent of shipping elsewhere. This was not revealed

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid., Churchill to Attlee (Lord President of the Council), 11 Nov. 1943, Appendix C, p. 597

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., Churchill to Mountbatten and Ismay, 2 Oct. 1943, Appendix C, p. 587.

within his memoirs as it would have illustrated how he himself jeopardised the loyalty of the Indian soldier. Wavell had called in Indian troops to help distribute what rations were available, as well as to sort out distribution centres and transport deficiencies.<sup>238</sup> Such Indian troops were undoubtedly disturbed by what they witnessed and, upon returning to their regiments, would have been possibly more susceptible to Japanese propaganda and would have questioned their loyalty and will to fight.<sup>239</sup> How could an Indian soldier who was 'eroded by anxieties about whether his wife and children had enough to eat' continue to be loyal, or continue to fight and defeat the enemy?<sup>240</sup> Had Churchill revealed how his indifference towards the Indian population had jeopardised the loyalty of the Indian Army, it would have shown that his reasoning to Roosevelt (over why he had placed an embargo on raising the Indian constitutional issue during the war so as not to affect the loyalty or effectiveness of the Indian Army) had merely been a pretence. Since Churchill wanted to return to power, and the Cold War necessitated that Anglo-American relations run smoothly, he needed to downplay, if not completely omit, the reality of his role in the Bengal Famine.<sup>241</sup>

The years 1942 to 1943 were a 'period full of shocks and change' for Churchill.<sup>242</sup> The 'storm over India' which had arguably been brewing since the end of the First World War, and Dyer's perpetration of the massacre at Amritsar,

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<sup>238</sup> Wavell to Amery, 2 Nov. 1943, *Transfer of Power*, vol. IV, doc. 200.

<sup>239</sup> Amery's memo, 22 Sept. 1943, *Transfer of Power*, vol. IV, doc. 133.

<sup>240</sup> Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India* (London: Little Brown & Company, 1997), p. 578.

<sup>241</sup> In Mukerjee, *Churchill's Secret War*, Churchill is demonised as the cause of the famine. Churchill did not cause the famine. The cause was the Japanese invasion and occupation of Burma, the subsequent cessation of Burmese imports of rice to India and the inability of local government officials to act upon the situation quickly enough, as well as stockpiling and ever-increasing prices. Without a doubt, Churchill could have done far more to alleviate the horrific famine conditions and his ambivalence towards the starving remains truly shocking.

<sup>242</sup> CHAR 20/99B/172: Churchill's speech at the farewell dinner in honour of Wavell before leaving to take up his post as Viceroy of India, 6 Oct. 1943.

had broken.<sup>243</sup> All Churchill wanted, as Gopal observed was for 'India ... to be kept quiet for the duration of the war'.<sup>244</sup> When Churchill wrote 'the fact that a number of crises break out at the same time does not necessarily add to the difficulty of coping with them', he did so in attempt to downplay the shocks and changes he had been confronted by and his inability to deal with them.<sup>245</sup> The struggle for power in the East, which he had thought was only against the Japanese, became a struggle against the left in Britain and against American anti-imperialism.<sup>246</sup> The resulting Cripps mission may have 'marked a significant advance in imperial policy', but the advance was instigated by sources other than Churchill, or even for that matter the British Left.<sup>247</sup> The mission was destined to fail, and it opened the post-war floodgates for an independent India. Following the loss of Hong Kong, Malaya, and Singapore, and the invasion and occupation of Burma, the Quit India campaign emphasised how vulnerable the Raj (and therefore the foundation of the empire itself) had become to both overwhelming external and determined internal forces. His appointment of Wavell proved to be anything but easy, and Wavell's pursuance of aid for the Bengal famine merely illustrated the mistake Churchill had made in appointing him—hence these episodes are barely acknowledged within Churchill's memoirs. Churchill realised how instrumental India had been to the nuances behind wartime Anglo-American relations becoming strained. In the post-war world, these tensions needed to be down-played so that the perceived strength and longevity of the 'special relationship' was not questioned.

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<sup>243</sup> For a contemporary account as to why the storm over India had been brewing (and the disappointment felt by Indian/American liberalism) see Anup Singh, 'Storm over India', *Far Eastern Survey*, 23/6 (1943), pp. 57–62.

<sup>244</sup> Gopal, 'Churchill and India', in Blake and Louis (eds), *Churchill*, p. 461.

<sup>245</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 456–7.

<sup>246</sup> Churchill may have wanted to keep India 'quiet' for the duration of the war but there were elements which claimed that wartime was 'not the time for constitutional changes' and that 'compromise proposals' were to be made instead. William L. Holland, 'Breaking the Indian Deadlock', *Far Eastern Survey*, 12/7 (1943), p.65.

<sup>247</sup> Owen, 'The Cripps mission of 1942: A reinterpretation', p. 62.

The bitterness he felt over these power struggles, both internal and external, tainted his regard for what he had once believed to be the jewel in the British Empire's crown. Nor did his bitterness diminish in the post-war, post-independence years. In fact, his bitterness infected how he would portray the Indian Army. An army whom he praised and lauded, but only when justifying why constitutional redress for India was impossible during wartime. Churchill directed so much scorn towards Roosevelt's opinion on the Raj that he hoped to distract the reader from the reality—that the rapid and successful Japanese advance from Hong Kong through to Burma meant that Roosevelt could 'no longer remain a passive spectator' and this, in itself, had dire ramifications for the life span of the British Empire in the Far East.<sup>248</sup> When Churchill signed the Atlantic Charter, he had said that America and Britain not only spoke the same language but also 'very largely' had 'the same thoughts'.<sup>249</sup> As this chapter has shown, the divergence of opinion between America and Britain became undeniably visible over India. The aim of the next chapter is to illustrate how this divergence of opinion became magnified over Burma and how the series of crises which gripped India from 1942 to 1943 merely exacerbated Churchill's postwar bitterness and tainted his portrayal of the Indian Army and their role in what was arguably one of the most gruelling and vicious theatres of the Second World War—the reconquest of Burma.

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<sup>248</sup> B. Shiva Rao, 'Review: The Cripps Mission', *MAS*, 5/3 (1971), p. 274.

<sup>249</sup> Robert Rhodes James (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches, Volume VI: 1935–1942* (New York: Chelsea House, 1974), Churchill broadcast, London, 24 Aug. 1941, p. 6473.



**Illustration V**



This example of anti-British Empire Japanese propaganda was found in India.

The American flag is entwined with the British in the far left corner and Churchill is depicted as the anchor to which the chains of imperial domination tie the Indian subjects. Churchill's image as the imperial John Bull worked against him as far as India was concerned—a point he admitted when searching for a new candidate for the position of Viceroy of India.

## **Chapter VI: Churchill's Portrayal of the Indian Army, and the Reconquest of Burma.**

For Churchill the seemingly endless defeats that the Japanese had inflicted on the British Empire in the Far East were a national and racial humiliation. But the Japanese invasion and occupation of Burma was also a personal indignity for Churchill as his father, Lord Randolph Churchill, had been responsible for the annexation of Upper Burma by the British Empire when he was Secretary of State for India (1885–1886). In fact, Churchill often recalled how his father frequently declared ‘I annexed Burma’.<sup>1</sup> As work on the fifth volume of his memoirs progressed, Churchill wrote a note to the syndicate (originally drafted as a ‘directive’)<sup>2</sup> which stated that he would not ‘spare more than 3,000 words ... on the struggles in Burma’.<sup>3</sup> Churchill may have described Burma as ‘a flower on a long and slender stalk’,<sup>4</sup> but the relative ease with which Japanese troops had invaded and occupied it illustrated how the arrangements for Burma’s defence had been ‘sketchy, to put it mildly.’<sup>5</sup> The series of crises in India from 1942 to 1943 had revealed a discernible tension in the wartime Anglo-American relationship; and over Burma, the relationship between the two allies became comparably acute. When it came to his memoirs therefore, Churchill not only had to sooth the mass of raw nerves that Burma had exposed regarding the ‘special relationship’, but also hide his chagrin that victory over the Japanese had

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<sup>1</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill: Volume II* (London: Macmillan, 1906), p. 484. See also Robert F. Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill: A Political Life* (Oxford: OUP, 1981), pp. 206–12; and Robert Rhodes James, *Lord Randolph Churchill* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1959; Phoenix edn, 1994), pp. 205–06.

<sup>2</sup> CHUR 4/25A/19: Churchill to the syndicate, undated.

<sup>3</sup> CHUR 4/25A/18: Churchill to the syndicate, 7 Nov. 1950.

<sup>4</sup> CHUR 4/261/25: Churchill’s draft notes on the invasion of Burma, undated.

<sup>5</sup> Brian Bond (ed.), *Chief of Staff: The Diaries of Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Pownall, Volume II, 1940–1944* (London: Leo Cooper, 1974), 20 Dec. 1941, p. 66.

been 'won by the Indian Army'<sup>6</sup>—an army that Churchill thought was inept, disloyal and nothing more than an armed 'Frankenstein's monster'.<sup>7</sup>

This chapter will examine Churchill's portrayal of the Indian Army throughout his *Second World War*, and will suggest reasons why he almost ignored the role the Indian Army took in the reconquest of Burma.<sup>8</sup> David Reynolds has written that Churchill's famous phrase (about how he had 'not become the King's First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the Empire') did not appear in his memoirs as it 'sounded very hollow in 1950, after India, Pakistan and Burma had become independent and after Britain had withdrawn in chaos from Palestine'.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, but was the advent of Indian independence so painful an experience for Churchill that when the time came to compose his post-war narrative, it tainted his portrayal of the Indian Army, an army which had been pivotal in the reconquest of Burma?

Churchill did little more than briefly acknowledge the role the Indian Army had played in the trenches of Northern France during the First World War, when he wrote that, 'the steadfast Indian Corps in the cruel winter of 1914 held the line by Armentieres'.<sup>10</sup> In reality, Indian troops had distinguished themselves

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<sup>6</sup> Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, Its Officers and Men* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974; Papermac Macmillan edn, 1986), p. 522.

<sup>7</sup> Penderel Moon (ed.), *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal* (Karachi: OUP, 1974), p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Unless otherwise stated, the term Indian Army is used in this research to refer to Indian Army units which were part of the British and Commonwealth forces.

<sup>9</sup> David Reynolds, *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), p. 336.

<sup>10</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Volume 1, The Gathering Storm* (London: Cassell, 1948), p. 5. For a detailed analysis see Gordon Corrigan, *Sepoys in the Trenches* (Stroud: Spellmount, 2006); Mark Harrison, 'The Fight Against Disease in the Mesopotamian Campaign', in Hugh Cecil and Peter H. Liddle (eds), *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced* (London: Leo Cooper, 1996), pp. 475–89; Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, *My Indian Years, 1910–1916* (London: John Murray, 1948), pp. 98–136; and David E. Omissi,

not only in the trenches in France but also in Mesopotamia, and each of the other major theatres of the First World War.<sup>11</sup> Churchill was well aware of the Indian Army's record on the Western Front as he had, after all, written about the Indian Army in his *World Crisis*.<sup>12</sup> In his narrative of the First World War, the first impression Churchill gave of Indian troops was that their mobilization primarily created a logistical problem. Troops from New Zealand, Australia and Canada needed safe ocean-bound transportation, but so too did the Indian troops destined for Europe.<sup>13</sup> But Churchill also specified that troops removed from India, whether British or 'native', would have to be replaced by Territorial troops in order to maintain India's internal and frontier security. As September 1914 dawned, Churchill wrote that 'two British Indian divisions with additional cavalry (in all nearly 50,000 men) were already crossing the Indian Ocean'. He did not mention how those 'native' Indian troops were going against caste doctrine by crossing the Ocean in order to fight for their King-Emperor—a point which he would make later in the final volume of his *History of the English-Speaking Peoples*.<sup>14</sup>

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'The Indian Army in the First World War, 1914–1918', in Daniel Marston and Chandar S. Sundaram (eds), *A Military History of India and South Asia: From the East India Company to the Nuclear Era* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), pp. 74–87.

<sup>11</sup> See Stephen P. Cohen, *The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), especially pp. 68–76; Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, pp. 412–43; Hugh Tinker, 'India in the First World War and after', *JCH*, 3/4 (Oct. 1968), pp. 89–107; and Charles C. Trench, *The Indian Army and the King's Enemies, 1900–1947* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), pp. 75–90.

<sup>12</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The World Crisis: Volumes I–V* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1923–31).

<sup>13</sup> Churchill, *The World Crisis: Volume I, 1911–1914* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1923), pp. 186–245.

<sup>14</sup> Churchill wrote that Indian troops 'lost caste' once they crossed the high seas. Winston S. Churchill, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples: Volume IV, The Great Democracies* (London: Cassell, 1958), p. 67. The research for these

His knowledge of India's role in the First World War meant that Churchill would have been aware of India's capacity to be an immense supply depot in terms of manpower, raw materials and food—a 'central bastion'.<sup>15</sup> He would have been aware of India being a 'permanent strategic reserve and the principal means by which British interests were secured throughout Asia'.<sup>16</sup> But his unwillingness to deviate from his opinion of Indian troops stopped him from recognising the potential of the Indian Army. Churchill's low opinion of Indian troops started when he had been a subaltern in the Queen's Fourth Hussars stationed in Bangalore between 1896 and 1899. Throughout his time in India, Churchill had been more concerned with the prestige this position offered (horses and polo playing being the outward trappings of wealth and the likelihood that his army experience would lead to a political career), than with what he could learn about the Indian Army, or India itself. He refused to learn Hindi, as he thought it 'quite unnecessary' since 'all natives here speak English perfectly and I cannot see any good in wasting my time acquiring a dialect which I shall never use'.<sup>17</sup> Although this meant that he could not 'enter very fully' into the 'thoughts

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volumes and the bulk of the writing was carried out by a team of researchers in the 1930s—primarily Bill Deakin and George Young. The war and Churchill becoming Prime Minister in 1940 meant the work was shelved until a more suitable time allowed for its completion. What this illustrates is that Churchill had the knowledge about the Indian troops but, when it came to his *Second World War*, he chose to gloss over it.

<sup>15</sup> See Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, p. 471.

<sup>16</sup> Keith Jeffery, "'An English Barrack in the Oriental Seas'? India in the Aftermath of the First World War', *MAS*, 15/3 (1981), p. 369.

<sup>17</sup> Randolph S. Churchill (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: Companion Volume I, Part 2, 1896–1900* (London: Heinemann, 1967), Churchill to Lady Jennie Churchill, 18 Nov. 1896, p. 703. However it should be noted that Churchill was not alone in his refusal to learn Hindi, nor was this situation unusual especially as his unit contained no Indian ranks. Furthermore, he was stationed in Bangalore where the local language would have been either Kannada or Tamil. Finally, the lingua franca of the colonial Indian Army was Urdu and not Hindi. (These points were made by Dr Chandar Sundaram in personal correspondence with the author).

and feelings' of the Indian troops which he encountered,<sup>18</sup> it did not stop him from presuming that

there was no doubt they liked having a white officer among them when fighting. ... They watched him carefully to see how things were going. If you grinned, they grinned. So I grinned industriously.<sup>19</sup>

The Singapore Mutiny of February 1915 did nothing to dispel Churchill's already low opinion of the Indian Army.<sup>20</sup> Yet it appears that he never looked at the reverse—that the overwhelming majority of the 800,000 Indian soldiers who saw action in France, Mesopotamia, Palestine and East Africa had fought valiantly alongside their British officers and counterparts and had remained loyal to the Empire.<sup>21</sup> Churchill further revealed his opinion of the Indian Army in the *Second World War* when he recalled how, in September 1940, his attention had been drawn to the way that Indian brigades only contained Indian troops. He deemed that this change, made by the Commander-in-Chief of the Middle East (Field-Marshal John Dill), 'most desirable'.<sup>22</sup> Churchill considered this change to be advantageous not as a result of the 'grudging concessions' that Indianization

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *My Early Life: A Roving Commission* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1930), p. 164.

<sup>20</sup> See Ian F. W. Beckett, 'The Singapore Mutiny of February, 1915', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 62/3 (1984), pp. 132–53; and 'The Mutiny at Singapore', *The Times*, 14 April 1915.

<sup>21</sup> Chandar S. Sundaram quotes the figure of 800,000 yet some estimates put the figure higher: see Chandar S. Sundaram, 'Grudging Concessions: The Officer Corps and Its Indianization, 1817–1940', in Marston and Sundaram (eds), *A Military History of India and South Asia*, p. 94. Also see Budheswar Pati, *India and the First World War* (New Delhi: Atlantic, 1996), especially pp. 30–64.

<sup>22</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Volume II, Their Finest Hour* (London: Cassell, 1949), Churchill to Field-Marshal John Dill, 21 Sept. 1940, p. 595.

of the Indian Army (during the previous two decades) had achieved, but because he believed the better trained and disciplined British troops could therefore be deployed elsewhere—in theatres such as Africa, Egypt and the Mediterranean, which he considered far more important.<sup>23</sup>

Following the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force (B.E.F.) from Dunkirk in late May to early June 1940, Churchill turned his attention to immediately reconstituting a similarly sized force in France as he feared that the French would not continue the war.<sup>24</sup> According to Churchill, if 'eight native battalions from India' could be sent to Palestine then the eight *regular* battalions, made up of British troops, in Palestine could go towards the reforming of the new B.E.F.<sup>25</sup> Once again, Churchill revealed how he relegated the status of Indian troops to no more than relief soldiers. Indeed, he would later describe them as such to Anthony Eden.<sup>26</sup> In the same memo to Eden, Churchill wrote that 'a ceaseless stream of Indian units' should be sent to Palestine and Egypt because 'India is doing nothing worth speaking of at the present time'.<sup>27</sup> Even though Churchill wrote that British affairs in the East and Middle East were suffering from a 'catalepsy by which they are smitten', he did not consider the Indian troops able to deal with this state of paralysis—he considered them only sufficient to augment British troops.<sup>28</sup> This illustrates how Churchill's opinion of India was often affected by his opinion of the Indian Army, and vice versa, and that his opinion of both India and the Indian Army had neither softened nor moderated in the intervening years. Churchill was still overly emotional when it came to the subject of India.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Andrew Sharpe, 'The Indianisation of the Indian Army', *History Today*, 36/3 (1986), pp. 47–52; and Sundaram, 'Grudging Concessions', pp. 88–101.

<sup>24</sup> Churchill, *Finest Hour*, Churchill to Ismay, 2 June 1940, p. 123.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, Churchill to Anthony Eden, 6 June 1940, p. 145.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Wavell depicted Churchill as overly emotional when it came to India. One example was over Britain's debt to India over which Churchill was 'intractable' but calmed down after his 'fireworks'. Moon (ed.), *Wavell*, pp. 12–13.

Churchill was equally disparaging towards the African brigades<sup>30</sup> and viewed them with a similar suspicion.<sup>31</sup> In a memo addressed to Ismay but marked for the attention of Wavell, Churchill wrote that he was not satisfied by the part played by the African brigades who were stationed in Kenya. Churchill viewed indigenous troops as inferior to British troops; he even viewed them as inferior to both the Australian and New Zealand soldiers whom he thought were, in turn, below the standard of the British troops. He also wrote that such 'native' troops were to be mixed together 'so that one lot can be used to keep the other in discipline'.<sup>32</sup> There was a hierarchy of troops in Churchill's mind—a definite pecking order with British officers and men at the top. Without exception, in the first two volumes of his memoirs of the Second World War, Churchill intimated that Indian troops (like their 'native' African counterparts), were not to be trusted, and were ill-disciplined, inefficient and not as professional as their British counterparts.

The Japanese invasion of Burma was a personal indignity for Churchill. Aside from his father's connection to Burma, the root of this personal awkwardness lay back in July 1940 when, as a result of Japan's 'inscrutable glare', he acquiesced in their demands to close the Burma Road.<sup>33</sup> Not surprisingly, Churchill would not admit in his memoirs that the closure of the Road amounted to an act of appeasement, and that 'our decision was *my*

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<sup>30</sup> See Ashley Jackson, *The British Empire and the Second World War* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), pp. 171–268; and David Killingray with Martin Plaut, *Fighting for Britain: African Soldiers in the Second World War* (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2010).

<sup>31</sup> Another example of Churchill being disparaging towards so called 'native' troops reads: 'The African Colonial divisions ought not surely to be called divisions at all. No one contemplates them standing in the line against a European army'. See Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Volume III, The Grand Alliance* (London: Cassell, 1950), Churchill to Chief of Staff Committee, 17 Feb. 1941, in Appendix C, p. 653. This also shows his lack of knowledge as the West African Brigade contained some white British troops.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Churchill, *Finest Hour*, p. 225.



doing'.<sup>34</sup> He had said that this manoeuvre 'was to stave off trouble for the time being in the hope and belief that our situation might become better in the future', whereas in reality it left an already vulnerable Burma more susceptible to attack and invasion.<sup>35</sup> Churchill's strategy revealed that he had little understanding of the potential strength and force of the Japanese in the Far East. It also revealed his antiquated belief that Burma was nothing more than a geographical 'appendage' to India, whose task was to act as a geographical buffer zone and protect India.<sup>36</sup> He still held this belief in 1947 when he was compiling and editing his memoirs and when the second reading of the Burma Bill of Independence was taking place in the Commons. He did not want to draw attention to how vulnerable Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore and Burma had actually been. Nor did he wish to reveal how the British Empire's perception of its power and influence in the Far East had been so skewed. Similarly, Churchill did not wish to narrate how some sections of the indigenous population had not only welcomed the invading Japanese but had helped them establish control of Burma.<sup>37</sup> Churchill's imperial pride seemed unable to confront the reality that some Burmese wanted to rid themselves of the British once and for all. Allocating fewer words on the struggles in Burma (when compared to other theatres such as the Mediterranean, Africa, Egypt or even the Middle East) meant that Churchill could avoid revealing the unstable nature of the British Empire east of Suez and how ill-informed his responses and reactions to this instability had been at the time.

Before examining Churchill's portrayal of the Indian Army's role in the reconquest of Burma, it is worth noting that he began to make a distinction between the British and the Indian Army only in the fourth volume of his memoirs. Churchill described the Indian Army as the 'British-Indian Army',<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> A.J.P. Taylor (ed.), *Off the Record: W.P. Crozier, Political Interviews, 1933–1943* (London: Hutchinson, 1973), p. 176.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Hansard, HC (series 5) vol. 443, col. 1851 (5 Nov. 1947).

<sup>37</sup> Michael W. Charney, *A History of Modern Burma* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009).

<sup>38</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Volume IV, The Hinge of Fate* (London: Cassell, 1951), p. 135.

using what one historian described as a 'clumsy locution'.<sup>39</sup> Ismay and Pownall, those two stalwart members of the syndicate, found Churchill's lack of consistency annoying. Ismay noted how

Mr 'C' sometimes refers to these Divisions as 'British Indian Divisions', sometimes as 'Indian Divisions', and sometimes just as 'Divisions'. I have a sort of idea that they had no British battalions and that therefore they ought to be called 'Indian Divisions'. But, in any case, he ought to be consistent.<sup>40</sup>

Pownall was even more scathing when he confirmed that he thought Churchill's 'British-Indian Division phrase is rather a bore really'.<sup>41</sup> Pownall continued to write that Churchill remembered only 'now and again' that it was 'his own hobby horse' and that, at times, he forgot or found 'the hobby horse a nuisance'.<sup>42</sup> Often asked to clean up the tracts of text on military matters, Pownall found that there were so many of these inconsistencies in Churchill's expressions for the Indian Army that he had 'got weary of chasing them up'.<sup>43</sup>

Churchill's use of the term 'British-Indian Army' speaks volumes about what he thought of the Indian Army.<sup>44</sup> He saw the Indian Army as essentially British albeit including Indian soldiers and although he was not the only person to think this, he was one of an ever decreasing number. The series of reforms which had slowly begun to penetrate the enclave which was the British Army's

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<sup>39</sup> Raymond Callahan, 'Churchill and the Indian Army', Second Joint Imperial War Museum/ King's College London, Military History Conference, *The Indian Army, 1939–1947*, 9 May 2009.

<sup>40</sup> ISMAY 2/3/192: Ismay to Pownall, 19 Jan. 1950.

<sup>41</sup> ISMAY 2/3/196A: Pownall to Ismay, 23 Jan. 1950.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Whenever Churchill wrote 'British-Indian Army' what he really referred to was the 'British-Officered Indian Army' which he had been a part of whilst stationed in Bangalore at the end of the nineteenth century.

perception about the Indian Army had helped in this regard. Although Indianization of the Indian officer corps had been discussed since the early nineteenth century, it was not until after the First World War that these discussions turned into a slow reality. Reforms such as the Imperial Cadet Corps (ICC) which was established in 1897, the eight-unit scheme of the 1920s, the admission of Indians to Sandhurst, and the establishment of the Indian Military College at Dehra Dun in 1932 all went some way to creating a truly Indian Army. Even if some reforms either failed (the ICC) or created further problems (such as segregation through the eight-unit scheme) the process of Indianization was at least being openly pursued.<sup>45</sup>

Churchill was disparaging about the ill-prepared state of the Indian Army at the outbreak of the Second World War. It must be pointed out that others, most notably British Commanding Officers posted in the Middle and Far East, shared Churchill's views about the unready state of the Indian troops. For example, Pownall wrote in his diary that although the 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade of the 17<sup>th</sup> Indian Division were a 'welcome reinforcement ... too much cannot be expected of them. They are raw and not fully trained'.<sup>46</sup> Yet Pownall realised that it was not the fault of the troops themselves: it was typically the fault of the British administration as 'we always seem to go into war in this condition'.<sup>47</sup> There was a further difference between Pownall and Churchill. At the beginning of the Burma campaigns, Pownall was being characteristically realistic regarding the rawness of the newly formed Indian units, whereas Churchill was still being disparaging when it came to narrating his memoirs. Pownall had kept a diary during the war and speculated as to what had gone wrong at Singapore, and why the Japanese had found it so easy to conquer Malaya and Burma. He wrote that there was only one reason for it, the Japanese troops were 'better led, better trained and, above all, *tougher* than ours'.<sup>48</sup> Much to Churchill's consternation were he ever to have read Pownall's diary, Pownall added that not only were the

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<sup>45</sup> See Chandar S. Sundaram, '“Martial” Indian Aristocrats and the Military System of the Raj: The Imperial Cadet Corps, 1900–1914', *JICH*, 25/3 (1997).

<sup>46</sup> Bond (ed.), *Chief of Staff: II*, 8 Jan. 1942, p. 76.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Causes of failure' entry, undated, p. 97.

Japanese 'superior to the Indian troops, which was perhaps to be expected', they were also superior 'to the British troops and to the Australians'.<sup>49</sup> Considering that Pownall became an integral member of the syndicate and (with Kelly) researched and drafted the majority of the text on Burma, it is surprising that Churchill's clumsy and pre-war and pre-Indian independence terminology remained for all to see. In itself this demonstrates that ultimately Churchill's opinion triumphed.

Churchill began his chapter on the invasion of Burma, in volume four, by admitting that 'there was a general belief that the Japanese would not start a major campaign against Burma until at least their operations in Malaya had been successful'.<sup>50</sup> It was in this chapter that Churchill noticeably made the distinction between the British Army and the Indian Army, or the British-Indian Army as he sometimes referred to it. In this chapter Churchill also attempted to assuage his guilt over the fall of Singapore, and attempted an historical sleight of hand. Churchill included a telegram that he had sent to Reginald Dorman-Smith, the Governor of Burma (May 1941 to August 1946), in which Churchill wrote that he regarded 'Burma and contact with China as the most important feature in the whole [Eastern] theatre of war'.<sup>51</sup> Churchill was arguably hoping to halt any criticism his post-war detractors may have had regarding his pursuit, or rather his lack of pursuit, of the invading Japanese at the time of publication (the *Hinge of Fate* was published in Britain in August 1951). Ever the forward-thinking politician, Churchill knew that the less ammunition he could give his critics, especially during the campaign for the general election which began in mid-September 1951, the better.

Having set the scene for the eventual fall of Rangoon, Churchill devoted the rest of the chapter to Anglo-Australian relations.<sup>52</sup> Churchill called on his

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 134.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., Churchill to Dorman-Smith, 16 Feb. 1942, p. 135.

<sup>52</sup> David Day, *The Great Betrayal: Britain, Australia and the Onset of the Pacific War, 1939–1942* (London: Angus and Robertson, 1988); and 'Loosening the Bonds: Britain, Australia and the Second World War', *History Today*, 38/2 (1988), pp. 11–17.

American benefactor, Roosevelt, to intervene and persuade Curtin (the Australian Prime Minister) to agree to divert Australian troops to Burma. Churchill described, at considerable length, the Australian Government's 'adverse' reaction.<sup>53</sup> Whilst Reynolds correctly noted that this was Churchill's postwar 'malicious jeu d'esprit', in that he 'remained unforgiving' almost a decade later, it should be noted that if Churchill was so pushed for space (and time as he was campaigning for his triumphal return to Downing Street) on Burma, why include this anti-Australian diatribe at this point in his memoirs?<sup>54</sup> Once again, Churchill was attempting a historical sleight of hand. By focusing the reader's attention on how obdurate the Australian Government had been (when they were arguably quite justified in declining Churchill's demands), Churchill seemingly placed the blame for the 'slender forces' that were in Burma at the feet of the Australian Government and not at his own.<sup>55</sup> But in this instance Churchill was not successful. When he wrote that as there were 'no troops in our control [which] could reach Rangoon in time to save it',<sup>56</sup> and that the 'loss of Rangoon meant the loss of Burma',<sup>57</sup> he was intimating how the British Government, surprised by the overwhelming force of the Japanese, were almost completely unprepared.

In writing of the resulting hasty retreat which the Japanese forced on the British and Indian Armies, Churchill reverted back to his 'great men' theory of history. The British were retreating and thousands of refugees from Burma, including hundreds of the Raj's civil servants, were attempting to retreat at the same time to relative safety in India. The casualties and deprivations experienced by both troops and civilians were appalling.<sup>58</sup> On the eve of the retreat, and

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<sup>53</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 136–46.

<sup>54</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 299.

<sup>55</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 135.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>58</sup> See Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Armies: Britain's Asian Empire and the War with Japan* (London: Penguin, 2005), pp. 71–253; and Werner Gruhl, *Imperial Japan's World War Two, 1931–1945* (New Jersey: Transaction, 2010), p. 117.

having set the scene for the inevitable loss of Burma to the Japanese, Churchill wrote that 'if we could not send an army we could at any rate send a man'.<sup>59</sup> Whether Churchill purposely belittled the British and Indian troops who were in Burma at the time of the Japanese invasion, by over-emphasising the supposed superiority of the Japanese forces is perhaps little more than speculation.<sup>60</sup> Yet the implication was that, whilst the troops themselves were beleaguered and Wavell, as the arbiter of the 'supreme direction of the Burma campaign' was clearly overwhelmed, there was nothing else to be done but send in a dashing British officer—General Alexander.\*<sup>61</sup> Churchill was reverting to type. By writing about Alexander in such terms, and by holding him aloft as he would later do Wingate,\* Auchinleck\* (for a short period) and Mountbatten\* (for arguably an even shorter period of time), Churchill was reinforcing his long-held notion that all the Indian Army needed was 'a white officer among them when fighting'.<sup>62</sup>

The next time Churchill noticeably made the distinction between Indian and British troops appears in the fifth volume of memoirs in the chapter which narrated 'the hardest fought battle of World War Two'—Monte Cassino.<sup>63</sup> Churchill wrote that the second major attack at Cassino 'fell to the 4<sup>th</sup> Indian

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<sup>59</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 146.

<sup>60</sup> Pownall's diary entry for 30 January 1942 confirms this over emphasis. He wrote that 'the Japs keep creeping onward little by little. Burma, as we thought, was making a mountain over a small molehill. The Jap forces used there proved to be quite small and gained more success than they should have, thus repeating what happened in the early days of Malaya'. Bond (ed.), *Chief of Staff: II*, 30 Jan. 1942, p. 81.

<sup>61</sup> Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 147.

<sup>62</sup> Churchill, *My Early Life*, p. 148.

<sup>63</sup> See Gerard Douds, 'Matters of Honour': Indian Troops in the North African and Italian Theatres', in Paul Addison and Angus Calder (eds), *Time to Kill: The Soldier's Experience of War in the West, 1939–1945* (London: Pimlico, 1997); Matthew Parker, *Monte Cassino: The Story of the Hardest Fought Battle of World War Two* (London: Headline, 2004); and Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, pp. 438–55

Division' who, having recently relieved the American troops, incurred such heavy losses on three consecutive nights that Churchill wrote that the second direct attack on Cassino 'had failed'.<sup>64</sup> Less than a month later the third attack on Cassino was taking place, this time not aimed against the monastery but on the town itself. Churchill wrote how the '1<sup>st</sup> German Parachute Division, probably the toughest fighters in all their Army, fought it out amid the heaps of rubble with the New Zealanders and Indians'.<sup>65</sup> The battle for Cassino was hard and vicious. Casualties were high and Churchill reported them as totalling 2,400—1,050 from the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Zealand Division; 401 British from the 4<sup>th</sup> Indian Division; 759 Indians from the 4<sup>th</sup> Division; and 190 from the 78<sup>th</sup> British Division.<sup>66</sup> Churchill wrote that the 'hard fighting in attacks and counter-attacks' meant that by 23 March 1944 the 'New Zealanders and Indians could do no more' and that even the Gurkhas 'had to be withdrawn'.<sup>67</sup> Churchill acknowledged that the resultant casualties were 'a heavy price to pay for what might seem small gains' but at this juncture in the war, Britain needed every such 'small gain' it could muster.<sup>68</sup> But why did Churchill make the distinction between British and Indian troops at this stage in his memoirs? Was it a literary device which he employed? For example, the entire first volume of his memoirs had been devoted to setting the scene for his climactic and dramatic arrival at Downing Street as Britain's wartime Prime Minister. Similarly, was Churchill making the distinction between British and Indian troops in order to be able to attribute two years of defeats in Burma, from the retreat across Burma to India in 1942 to the beginning of the tide turning against the Japanese in early 1944, to the Indian Army itself? In other words, was Churchill setting up the Indian Army as a convenient scapegoat for the wave of disastrous campaigns in Burma?

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<sup>64</sup> Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, p. 442; p. 443.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 448.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 450. Churchill does not specify whether these figures were for the dead alone or whether the figures included the dead and the wounded and the missing in action.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

The brief chapter in which Churchill portrayed the campaigns for the reconquest of Burma, 'Burma and Beyond', is located towards the end of the fifth volume, *Closing the Ring*.<sup>69</sup> The title reveals that Churchill was merely giving Burma itself a cursory glance, as it alluded to what lay chronologically beyond Burma: the crushing defeat of Japan by American nuclear weapons (which would be covered in the sixth and final volume).<sup>70</sup> By the time the fifth volume was published, Churchill had achieved his ambition to be Prime Minister of peacetime Britain.<sup>71</sup> He was still concerned with not upsetting the American applecart, and with procuring access to atomic bomb research which had at one time been a shared Anglo-American venture.<sup>72</sup> As always, Churchill and the syndicate were conscious of what should, and could, be written in such a limited space—and evidently had little more than Anglo-American relations in mind. Aware of this, as well as Churchill's declaration that he could only spare 3,000 words on Burma, it comes as no surprise that he spent the first three and a half pages of this chapter on a narrative of American Pacific strategy. Typically Churchill centred his narrative upon individuals, in this case Americans (General MacArthur, Admiral Halsey, Admiral Nimitz and Admiral Spruance for praise), and he detailed the successes they had against the Japanese during the latter half of 1943 and the early part of 1944.<sup>73</sup> In August 1944 when Anglo-American relations were vulnerable to the slightest undercurrents, Churchill had written a

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 489–503.

<sup>70</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Volume VI, Triumph and Tragedy* (London: Cassell, 1954), pp. 532–59.

<sup>71</sup> The Conservatives won 321 seats, Labour won 295 seats, the Liberals gained 6 seats and other parties won 3 seats.

<sup>72</sup> CHUR 4/331/94–97: Pownall to Kelly, 29 Nov. 1951, in which Pownall was concerned with 'matters of detail' (amendments) on the 'Burma and Beyond' chapter which were to go in the fifth volume of memoirs, but which were too late to go in to the serialisation of the volume in the *Daily Telegraph*.

<sup>73</sup> CHUR 4/353C/298–99: Allen to Churchill, 26 June 1953, in which Allen warns Churchill against mentioning the lack of coordination between Halsey and MacArthur as it would 'probably be inappropriate for you to enter into discussion on this point in your book'.



letter to his confidant and outlet for frustration, his wife Clementine. He wrote that Alexander was being 'relegated to a secondary and frustrated situation' due to American insistence, and that those troops fighting in Burma, 'in the most unhealthy country in the world under the worst possible conditions' were doing so in order 'to guard the American air line over the Himalayas into their very over-rated China'. Disturbed by his belief that 'two-thirds of our forces are mis-employed for American convenience, and the other third is under American Command', Churchill wrote that such 'delicate and serious matters' were to be 'handled between friends in careful and patient personal discussion'. He concluded that he had 'no doubt' that he would 'reach a good conclusion, but you will see that life is not very easy'.<sup>74</sup> Life in Burma was not easy, and Churchill wrote that the history of the reconquest of Burma had to be read against the 'permanent background of geography [and] limited resources.'<sup>75</sup>

Having dealt with his American-centred narrative, Churchill turned his attention to the 'widely different scene in South-East Asia' where 'the Japanese had been masters of a vast defensive arc covering their early conquests'.<sup>76</sup> Once again, Churchill employed the tactic of exaggerating Japanese strength in order to explain why the British and Indian troops, who 'were at close grips' with them, had been so savagely beaten in Burma.<sup>77</sup> Yet he continued to air his grievances regarding American strategy in Burma. He mentioned how 'the divergence of opinion' between America and Britain continued and cited how he feared that if the proposed American strategy were followed then British forces would 'become side-tracked and entangled' in Northern Burma, the preferred American vantage point, and that this 'would deny [the British Empire] our rightful share in a Far Eastern victory'.<sup>78</sup> Briefly mentioning the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Divisions as well as the XVth Corps, which 'put an end to the legend of Japanese

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<sup>74</sup> Mary Soames (ed.), *Speaking for Themselves: The Personal Letters of Winston and Clementine Churchill* (London: Black Swan, 1999), Churchill to Clementine, 17 Aug. 1944, p. 500.

<sup>75</sup> Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, p. 495.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 493.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 495.

invincibility in the jungle',<sup>79</sup> Churchill then devoted two pages of his narrative on Burma to Wingate—whom Pownall described as 'a genius in that he is quite a bit mad'.<sup>80</sup> Orde Wingate and his Long Range Penetration units (the Chindits) continue to fascinate and deeply divide historians today.<sup>81</sup> Despite Wingate's mental instability, Churchill favoured him like a prize-winning pet and proudly displayed him to Roosevelt.<sup>82</sup> In doing this, Churchill illustrated how the British were playing not only an essential role in Burma (Wingate's remit was to help destroy Japanese lines of communications and supplies in order to support conventional advances from both the Chinese and British forces), but also how the British concurred with the preferences of American strategy.<sup>83</sup> As Kelly later wrote, Churchill 'sensed that the Americans felt we were not pulling our weight and consequently dispatched Wingate—whom Michael Howard once said to me was "a lunatic shit"—as a gun-toting flamboyant cowboy who would appeal to the Americans of the Middle West'.<sup>84</sup> Kelly's own take on Wingate was that 'few of us in the regular Indian Army will forgive Wingate for having deserted and slaughtered his own men'.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 496.

<sup>80</sup> Bond (ed.), *Chief of Staff: II*, 17 Oct. 1943, p. 112.

<sup>81</sup> See Shelford Bidwell, *The Chindit War: Stilwell, Wingate and the Campaign in Burma, 1944* (New York: Macmillan, 1980); Major-General Stephen Woodburn Kirby, *The War against Japan: Volume III, The Decisive Battles* (London: HMSO, 1961; Uckfield: Naval and Military Press, edn, 2004); Peter Mead, 'Orde Wingate and the Official Historians', *JCH*, 14/1 (1979), pp. 55–82; Peter Mead and Shelford Bidwell, 'Orde Wingate—Two Views', *JCH*, 15/3 (1979), pp. 401–04; and David Rooney, *Wingate and the Chindits: Redressing the Balance* (London: Cassell, 1994).

<sup>82</sup> Pownall wrote that Wingate was 'distinctly *unstable*' and that Churchill had a 'remarkable flair for choosing oddities just because they are oddities (he, being one himself, has a sympathetic feeling)'. Bond (ed.), *Chief of Staff: Vol. II*, 17 Oct. 1943, p. 112.

<sup>83</sup> Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, p. 497–9.

<sup>84</sup> DEKE 1: Reader Correspondence, Kelly to Martin Gilbert, 11 Oct. 1988.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

At this stage of the campaign in Burma, from March to May 1944, some of the fiercest battles against the Japanese were being fought. The Japanese aim was to destroy the British and Indian forces around Kohima and Imphal, progress up through the Dimapur pass, and forge ahead across to India. Churchill allocated less than two pages to the battles for Imphal and Kohima.<sup>86</sup> Churchill wrote one paragraph about the Battle of Imphal.<sup>87</sup> He mentioned the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Indian Divisions and how they were flown into Imphal and Dimapur respectively. Churchill wrote of how the XXXIII<sup>rd</sup> Corps (under General Stopford's command), along with the 2<sup>nd</sup> British Division, 'an independent Indian brigade,'<sup>88</sup> and the remnants of Wingate's Chindits were also sent to Dimapur.<sup>89</sup> Churchill was equally scant regarding the battle of Kohima, to which he devoted a similar sized paragraph.<sup>90</sup> He wrote that the garrison at Kohima 'consisted of a battalion of the Royal West Kent, a Nepalese battalion, and a battalion of the Assam Rifles'.<sup>91</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> British Division, along with the 161<sup>st</sup> Indian Brigade, relieved the Kohima garrison, and Churchill ended his narrative by writing that the 'valiant defence of Kohima against all odds was a fine episode'.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, pp. 500-2.

<sup>87</sup> For the Imphal Battle see: David Rooney, *Burma Victory: Imphal, Kohima and the Chindit issue, March 1944 to May 1945* (London: Cassell, 1992); and Frank McLynn, *The Burma Campaign* (London: Bodley Head, 2010).

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 500.

<sup>89</sup> Wingate was killed on 24 March 1944 in an air crash. For Churchill this was 'shattering news'. See CHAR 20/160/92: Churchill to Dill, 28 March, 1944.

<sup>90</sup> See John Colvin, *Not Ordinary Men: The Battle of Kohima re-assessed* (London: Leo Cooper, 1994); Leslie Edwards, *Kohima, The Furthest Battle: The Story of the Japanese invasion of India in 1944 and the 'British-Indian Thermopylae'* (Stroud: History Press, 2009); Fergal Keane, *Road of Bones: The Siege of Kohima 1944, The Epic Story of the Last Great Stand of Empire* (London: Harper, 2010); and Michael Lowry, *Fighting through to Kohima: A Memoir of War in India and Burma* (London: Leo Cooper, 2003).

<sup>91</sup> Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, p. 500.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 501.

Even though Churchill briefly mentioned eight individual British, Indian, or Nepalese units he made no mention of the fact that Stopford's XXXIIIrd Corps had been placed under the command of General William Slim\* on 27 March 1944. Nor did Churchill once mention Slim's Fourteenth Army. Churchill also mistook the units of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Division for units of the 2<sup>nd</sup> British Division.<sup>93</sup> After his narrative of less than two pages (of which he deemed two paragraphs were sufficient to cover the battles for both Imphal and Kohima) Churchill wrote that in London he had 'felt the stress' of how 'sixty thousand British and Indian soldiers, with all their modern equipment, were confined' to these two battlefields.<sup>94</sup> Churchill then reverted to describing American successes (such as Stilwell's manipulation of Chinese forces and especially of Chiang Kai-Shek, as well as Merrill's Marauders),<sup>95</sup> and finished this all too brief chapter on the beginning of the reconquest of Burma by quoting Mountbatten (another of his temporary favourites and one who fitted the great men of history model) who wrote that 'the Japanese bid for India was virtually over, and ahead lay the prospect of the first major British victory in Burma'.<sup>96</sup>

Churchill's narrative lent heavily towards extolling American successes, rather than British and Indian ones. Churchill's inability to glance eastwards during the war (especially towards Burma), was magnified during the postwar years, as his contemporary concerns were filled with appeasing American opinion in order for Britain to have access to the formerly shared research on 'tube alloys'.<sup>97</sup> This meant that he needed to avoid any confrontation, and one

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<sup>93</sup> <http://www.burmastar.org.uk/1944.htm>.

<sup>94</sup> Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, p. 501.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 501-02.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 503.

<sup>97</sup> 'Tube alloys', the code word used by Churchill throughout his correspondence regarding the Anglo-American shared research on the Atomic Bomb, was a purposefully designed term used to deter any understanding of the project, should any snippet be overheard, the responsibility of which had been passed by the MAUD Committee to the DSIR which was administered by a senior ICI executive, Wallace Akers. It was Akers and Sir John Anderson, Lord President of the Council and proto-minister for science, who devised the term 'Tube

way of doing this was to deliberately gloss over the wartime differences about Burma. But ever aware that his postwar reputation was intertwined with his self-penned wartime portrayal, Churchill did not wish to be seen as a leader who could not argue his case, even if he were up against formidable opposition. For this reason he introduced a note of rancour against the 'American wish to succour China not only by an ever-increasing air-lift, but also by land', which, Churchill claimed, led to 'heavy demands upon Britain and the Indian Empire'.<sup>98</sup> Any postwar discussion of Burma would not only include the virtues of the Indian Army, virtues which Churchill would not accept, but also it would reveal how Burma had been the 'tale of the rejection of one strategic plan after another' because of divergent and opposed American and British purposes.<sup>99</sup> Prasad succinctly encapsulated the conflicting American and British perspectives on Burma—'one seeking to utilise India for the object of keeping China in the war and hitting Japan directly therefrom, the other keen to get back their old empire in South-East Asia'.<sup>100</sup>

Burma became the political sticking point between America and Britain. America, under Roosevelt, not only saw Chinese troops under Chiang Kai-Shek as a way of diverting Japanese attention during the war but also considered China capable of maintaining the balance of power in Asia in the post-war world. Britain, on the other hand, saw China as lacking this potential both during and after the war. If China were to take centre stage in post-war Asia, that would undermine Britain's post-war imperial claims. Churchill therefore became concerned that too much of a Chinese presence in wartime Burma might, once Japan had been defeated, encourage the centuries-old Chinese claim to Upper Burma. Admittedly, Churchill's voice was not the only British voice to want to

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Alloys' to describe the British research into the potential of atomic research. See Jim Baggott, *Atomic: The First War of Physics and the Secret History of the Atomic Bomb, 1939–1949* (London: Ikon, 2009), p. 102.

<sup>98</sup> Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, p. 494.

<sup>99</sup> S.N. Prasad, K.D. Bhargava and P.N. Khara (eds), *The Reconquest of Burma: Volume I* (Orient Longmans: Combined Inter-Services Historical Section, India & Pakistan, 1958), p. xxv.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

safeguard Britain's imperial power for a post-war Asian carve-up where it was hoped that pre-war imperial territories would be added to, and not detracted from. Wavell was particularly concerned about the wartime presence of too many Chinese troops in Burma, writing that 'it was obviously better to defend Burma with Imperial troops than with Chinese and [that the] Governor particularly asked me not to accept more Chinese for Burma than was absolutely necessary'.<sup>101</sup>

The second divergence between American and British strategy over Burma was the building of the Ledo Road which Churchill called 'an immense, laborious task, unlikely to be finished until the need for it had passed'.<sup>102</sup> The Ledo Road, which stretched from Assam to China, was the only viable alternative for maintaining supplies to China during the war. In order to execute the American request to increase the 'flow of supplies into China', which could 'only be done by increasing the air tonnage or by opening a road through Burma',<sup>103</sup> Churchill noted that British troops would have to 'reconquer Northern Burma first and quickly'.<sup>104</sup> Churchill stated his objection immediately, because whilst Britain 'favoured keeping China in the war and operating air forces from her territory' he hoped for 'a sense of proportion and the study of alternatives'. He 'disliked intensely the prospect of a large-scale campaign in Northern Burma' where 'one could not choose a worse place for fighting the Japanese'. Churchill claimed that although the British had vociferously argued that 'the enormous expenditure of man-power and material would not be worthwhile', he had 'never succeeded in deflecting the Americans from their purpose'.<sup>105</sup>

Churchill's main objection to a campaign along the lines of the American suggestion was that it would invariably mean that British forces 'would become side-tracked and entangled there [which] would deny us our rightful share in a

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<sup>101</sup> CHAR 20/69A/41: Wavell to Churchill, 26 Jan. 1942.

<sup>102</sup> Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, p. 494.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, Roosevelt to Churchill, 25 Feb. 1944, p. 495.

<sup>104</sup> Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, p. 494.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

Far Eastern victory'.<sup>106</sup> Churchill wanted to 'contain the Japanese in Burma' so that 'our whole British-Indian Imperial front would thus advance across the Bay of Bengal into close contact with the enemy'.<sup>107</sup> He wanted Burma to be liberated by the British Empire—not by the anti-imperialist Americans. Roosevelt offered support to Churchill when he wrote that 'I feel that with your energetic encouragement Mountbatten's commanders are capable of overcoming the many difficulties involved'.<sup>108</sup> Roosevelt argued that:

the continued build-up of Japanese strength in Burma requires us to ... prevent them from launching an offensive that may carry them over the borders into India. ... I most urgently hope therefore that you back to the maximum a vigorous and immediate campaign in Upper Burma.<sup>109</sup>

In his memoirs, Churchill heavily edited this telegram from Roosevelt. In the original telegram the divergence between American and British strategy was clear. Roosevelt wrote that he was 'gravely concerned over the recent trends in strategy that favor an operation toward Sumatra and Malaya in the future rather than to face the immediate obstacles that confront us in Burma'.<sup>110</sup> Roosevelt

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 495.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, Roosevelt to Churchill, 25 Feb. 1944, p. 495. See also John J. Sbrega, 'Anglo-American Relations and the Selection of Mountbatten as Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia', *Military Affairs*, 46/3 (1982) which persuasively argues that Churchill's appointment of Mountbatten was one way of mollifying American demands for immediate action in Burma which, in itself, illustrated how tense the wartime 'special relationship' had become.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Warren Kimball (ed.), *Churchill and Roosevelt, The Complete Correspondence: Volume II, Alliance Forged* (London: Collins, 1984), Roosevelt to Churchill, 24 Feb. 1944, p. 756.

failed to see the merit in a Sumatran operation (or any amphibious operation) when there appeared 'to be much more to be gained by employing all the resources we now have available in an all-out drive into upper Burma so that we can build up our air strength in China and insure the essential support for our westward advance to the Formosa-China-Luzon area'.<sup>111</sup> (Interestingly, Kimball places this telegram at the end of his *Alliance Forged* and just before his *Alliance Declining* volumes of the complete Churchill and Roosevelt correspondence).<sup>112</sup> Burma was one of the thorns in the wartime special relationship and it revealed how the alliance was merely one forged out of necessity, rather than emerging naturally from similar ideals held by English-speaking peoples. Churchill would rather have extolled the virtues of the Indian Army in his memoirs, than reveal the fragile nature of the Anglo-American alliance—another reason why he would allocate only 3,000 words on Burma.

The phrase 'forgotten army' is widely used to refer to Slim's Fourteenth Army, as they not only received little in the way of equipment and supplies but also seemed to be 'neglected by both London and Washington'.<sup>113</sup> On the Fourteenth Army's lack of equipment, Slim wrote:

No boats? We'll build 'em! ... No parachutes? We'll make 'em out of sandbags. No road metal? We'll bake our own tracks and lay 'em! No air strips, put down bithess. Medium guns? Saw off three feet of the barrel and go a shooting!<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Kimball (ed.), *Alliance Forged*, p.756.

<sup>112</sup> Warren Kimball (ed.), *Churchill and Roosevelt, The Complete Correspondence: Volume I, Alliance Emerging* (London: Collins, 1984); *Volume II, Alliance Forged* (London: Collins, 1984); and *Volume III, Alliance Declining* (London: Collins, 1984).

<sup>113</sup> Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Armies: The Fall of British Asia, 1941–1945* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), p. xxx.

<sup>114</sup> SLIM 3/2: Slim's lecture notes for a talk on the Burma Campaign, given in Copenhagen, undated, p. 8.



Slim's motto was always, 'God helps those who help themselves'.<sup>115</sup> But Slim's army were also forgotten and glossed over by the British public. In *The Times* 'Review of the year 1942', the British public read how the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor therefore bringing America directly into the war.<sup>116</sup> The public read how 'the Japanese did not pause, but turned at once to attack Burma', and how the Russian, Mediterranean and Middle Eastern war theatres had been under constant attack.<sup>117</sup> The North African campaigns, the Russian resistance to the German offensive, and the award of the George Cross to Malta for its 'heroism and devotion' were all mentioned. The Eighth Army received several mentions, as did Alexander, Wavell and American troops. But not even an allusion was made to the armies fighting in Burma, let alone any specific mention of Indian or African troops. Whilst Churchill was not the progenitor of the way in which these armies were forgotten, he did have the opportunity to rectify this situation in his memoirs. Reynolds suggests that Churchill did not include the achievements of Slim and the Fourteenth Army in his fourth volume of memoirs due to the more than usual rush, and disorganisation, in getting the proofs to the publishers.<sup>118</sup> This may well be so, but arguably Churchill did not include the troops in Burma because they were a constant source of humiliation for him. They had, after all, to use Slim's own phrase, turned 'defeat into victory' with very little help compared to the other theatres of war and, above all, it had been the Indian Army which had been in the majority.<sup>119</sup> To include them by name, to remember the forgotten, would mean Churchill would have had to revise his opinion of Indian troops—something he was never prepared to do.

On 1 June 1951, a year before the fifth volume of Churchill's memoirs was published, Slim was invited to give another speech to the Burma Reunion meeting. He included an anecdote about how, one day in 1942,

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> 'Review of the Year, 1942', *The Times*, 2 Jan. 1943.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 402–3.

<sup>119</sup> The phrase 'defeat into victory' has been consistently used when referring to the Burma campaigns of 1941 to 1945, and finds its origins in the title of Slim's memoirs, *Defeat into Victory* (London: Cassell, 1956).

at the worst time of the retreat from Burma, General Joseph Stilwell—Vinegar Joe to you—and I sat on a hill contemplating the situation. It could only be described, to use language politer than you've sometimes heard me use and a good deal politer than General Stilwell generally used, as a scene of considerable military confusion. After a thoughtful pause he turned to me. 'Well, General,' he said, 'There's some who say the British and the Americans are really the same people. I doubt it, but we sure did have one common ancestor!' 'And who was that?' I asked. He looked at me over the top of his spectacles and answered: 'Ethelred the Unready!' Stilwell and I, and a lot of you were paying then, as poor old Ethelred had a thousand years before, the price of unreadiness. It's a heavy price in blood and sweat and years.<sup>120</sup>

Slim knew that the men who made up the British, Indian, and Commonwealth Armies in Burma, from 1941 onwards, had been ill-prepared, ill-equipped, and ill-trained. He also knew that, because of the many races which made up the Fourteenth, 'the approach had to be suited to the man'. The result was that 'in four months our army was a confident, efficient, fighting team'.<sup>121</sup> Slim was highly aware of how being the forgotten army (in terms of supplies, rations, equipment, communications and Governmental as well as public concern) had led to them paying a heavy price. Slim possessed great virtues—he was a soldier's soldier—but in contrast to Wingate, Auchinleck (for a brief time) or Alexander, Slim was 'fortunate in not being in direct communication with the Prime Minister' as such direct communication was cumbersome, to say the

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<sup>120</sup> SLIM 3/3: Burma Reunion Speech, 1 June 1951.

<sup>121</sup> SLIM 3/2: Slim's lecture notes on the Burma Campaign, given in Copenhagen, undated, p. 3.

least.<sup>122</sup> Field-Marshal Lord Alanbrooke\* observed that, in March 1942, after having spent an exhausting evening with the Chiefs of Staff, he finally managed to get Churchill to withdraw his 'offensive wire' to Auchinleck and send one which Alanbrooke and the Chiefs had drafted instead: 'thank heaven we were able to stop the wire and re-word it'.<sup>123</sup>

Slim was not one of Churchill's favourites. Perhaps this is why, after the fifth volume of memoirs was published, Slim did not hesitate to confront Churchill over how he and his men had been forgotten all over again. Whilst Churchill notified Pownall of Slim's complaint, there does not seem to have been any urgency to the communication nor did Churchill issue a directive to counteract the complaint. He simply wrote that Slim had received 'a good many letters' from the Fourteenth Army about their lack of a mention in *Closing the Ring*.<sup>124</sup> By 1952, as Reynolds notes, Slim was not a man anyone could ignore. In 1948 Attlee had ensured that Slim succeeded Montgomery as Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and in November 1952 Slim was offered the Governor-Generalship of Australia (a post he was to hold for seven years).<sup>125</sup> Pownall responded within two days to Churchill having drawn his attention to Slim's complaint writing that he too had heard a complaint that the Fourteenth Army was not 'referred to by name' within the volume.<sup>126</sup> Pownall explained that the absence came about due to the 'strategic planning in this period' being 'generally above Army level'.<sup>127</sup> He added, by way of explanation, that the 'operations themselves' had been carried out by a 'widely dispersed Corps', and that when Churchill arrived at the narrative (which covered how 'two of the Corps joined

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<sup>122</sup> Mason makes the point that to be in constant contact or communication with Churchill was at times helpful but at other times a drain upon time and energy when in the field. See Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, p. 505.

<sup>123</sup> Alex Danchev and Daniel Todman (eds), *War Diaries, 1939–1945: Field-Marshal Lord Alanbrooke* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2001: Phoenix Press edn, 2002), 2 March 1942, p. 235.

<sup>124</sup> CHUR 4/341/6: Churchill to Pownall, 8 Nov. 1952.

<sup>125</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 449.

<sup>126</sup> CHUR 4/341/5: Pownall to Churchill, 10 Nov. 1952.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

up near Imphal' and how 'from that time the Army had a much more direct part to play') it would, of course, be 'duly reflected' in the final volume.<sup>128</sup> Perhaps Churchill's inclusion of Slim and the Fourteenth Army in the final volume of his memoirs would redress the imbalance which had been so clearly displayed—especially against the Indian Army.

It was therefore anticipated that Churchill's portrayal of the reconquest of Burma would appear in the final volume of memoirs; a volume which was increasingly thought of as an apologia to those whom he had previously either forgotten or offended.<sup>129</sup> Readers were once again to be disappointed, as Churchill concentrated on the war in the West. It was only briefly after the triumph of Overlord was depicted that Churchill turned his attention to 'how, when and where' British forces could 'strike at Japan, and assure for Britain an honourable share in the final victory'.<sup>130</sup> In other words, how and when could the British Empire regain Singapore, Malaya and Burma? Churchill was politic enough to admit that, in 1944, he did not want Britain's 'rightful possessions' to be handed back at the peace table.<sup>131</sup> Published in 1954, this sentiment of Churchill's echoed a concern that Mountbatten had raised a decade earlier:

our prestige in the Far East is unlikely to recover from the blow of having the British Empire handed back to us, possibly with strings attached, by a Peace Treaty imposed as the result of a predominantly American victory. I realise that this is a political aspect that does not concern me.<sup>132</sup>

This was the crux of the problem for Churchill. Having ignored Burma for so long, having concentrated solely on the war in Europe and North Africa, and having favoured all other theatres of war above and beyond the Far East, let

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 453.

<sup>130</sup> Churchill, *Triumph and Tragedy*, p. 129.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>132</sup> CHAR 20/173/28: Mountbatten to Churchill, 10 Oct. 1944.

alone Burma, he now had to align American wishes with as little prospective loss to British imperial prestige as possible.

As he had done in previous volumes, Churchill emphasised the American strategic plans for the proposed Allied victory over Japan. After the briefest mention of 'the British-Indian Fourteenth Army, under the able and forceful leadership of General Slim',<sup>133</sup> Churchill swiftly turned to recount American successes under Stilwell, and the perennial problems faced by British strategy in Burma—an inability and overwhelming reluctance to take resources from European theatres to make gains in the predominantly American sphere of the Far East.<sup>134</sup> In between his communications with Mountbatten and Roosevelt, Churchill allocated one paragraph to Slim's Fourteenth Army – the XXXIII<sup>rd</sup> Corps, the East African brigade (who had established the bridgehead at Sittaung) and the 5<sup>th</sup> Indian division – before reverting to coverage of American strategy and American changes in command. Even though he included these troops in his narrative, this was done in order to highlight the extent of the involvement of British Commonwealth forces in Burma, and not as a way of lauding the Indian Army's own efforts. It appeared as if Churchill was illustrating how the British Empire, with him at its helm, had followed American strategic policy willingly. Despite Mountbatten's 'excellent idea' of a land advance across Burma whilst simultaneously carrying out an amphibious attack on Rangoon, Churchill wrote that, as it would have 'demanded many more troops and much more shipping' which could only 'be found from North-West Europe', it would not have been possible.<sup>135</sup> Suddenly Churchill relegated Britain to the status of a declining imperial power—one which had the capacity to take only 'diversionary enterprises'.<sup>136</sup>

The final volume of memoir had a lot to contend with. It was not only an apologia to all those whom Churchill had offended or left out in previous volumes, but also it was compiled and edited whilst he was in his second tenure at Downing Street, and as ill health began to set in. It is not surprising therefore

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<sup>133</sup> Churchill, *Triumph and Tragedy*, p. 144.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144–5.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, Churchill to Ismay, 'The War Against Japan', 12 Sept. 1944, p. 146.

that, when coupled with both India and Burma's independence, and the British Empire having been watered down into a Commonwealth by Attlee and his Labour Government of 1945 to 1951, Churchill paid even less attention to the Far East and the Indian Army in his final volume. Throughout the proceeding volumes, as Mason noted, Churchill barely acknowledged that India had sent troops to the Middle East early in the war and that they had taken part in 'Wavell's first victories against the Italians at Sidi Barrani and in Abyssinia'.<sup>137</sup> Indian troops had been instrumental in holding off Rommel's advance on Tobruk; they had contributed three divisions to the invasion of Italy; and had held Iraq, Persia, and to a large extent Syria.<sup>138</sup> But most galling for Churchill was how the Indian Army had been instrumental in the British victory over the Japanese in Burma. The price tag which accompanied the success of the Indian Army was, as Bayly and Harper commented, 'the rapid independence of India' which proved to be, at least for Churchill, too high a price to pay.<sup>139</sup>

Churchill's ignominious dismissal of the Indian Army, and especially its role in the reconquest of Burma, was a deliberate omission from his memoirs. It may not however, be entirely fair to blame subsequent histories for a similar lapse. After all, one of the most momentous events in Indian history had only just occurred – independence (accompanied by the horrors of partition) – and understandably this became the focus of Indian history in the post-independent era rather than the contribution India, and the Indian Army, had made to the Second World War.<sup>140</sup> It is however, inadequate and unjust to not question

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<sup>137</sup> Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, p. 476.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Armies*, p. xxix.

<sup>140</sup> See Bipan Chandra, *India After Independence* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2000); Patrick French, *Liberty or Death: India's Journey to Independence and Division* (London: Flamingo, 1998); Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *India's Partition: Process, Strategy and Mobilization* (New Delhi: OUP, 1993); Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Alex Von Tunzelmann, *Indian Summer: The Secret History of the End of an Empire* (London: Pocket Book, 2008); and Stanley Wolpert, *Shameful Flight: The Last Years of the British Empire in India* (Oxford: OUP, 2006).

Churchill's disregard of the Indian Army. It is also not enough to explain his dismissal in terms of his imperialistic, racial assumptions. After all, he changed his mind regarding the Japanese soldier – from non-threatening throughout 1939 and 1940 to a vicious, brutal and dedicated professional soldier by 1943 – yet he did not change his mind regarding the Indian soldier.<sup>141</sup>

The Indianization of the Indian Army, a long, slow and overdue process, had occupied the entire length of the interwar years and left virtually no time to update and mechanize the Indian Army itself.<sup>142</sup> By 1939, when the Viceroy (Lord Linlithgow) declared that India was at war with Germany, the Indian Army's officer corps had only 344 Indian officers alongside the 1,912 British officers.<sup>143</sup> The Indian Army ended the war with 15,740 Indian officers—three times the total peace establishment, British and Indian, of the mid-1930s.<sup>144</sup> By the end of 1942, despite the failure of the Cripps Mission and 'Quit India', the loyalty of the Indian Army was not questioned by the majority of its British counterparts. In June 1942, for example, General Archibald Wavell, the recently

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<sup>141</sup> There were, of course, instances of Churchill praising Indian troops. On 24 March 1941, Churchill wrote that 'His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom gratefully recognise the valiant contribution which Indian troops have made to the Imperial victories in North Africa'. But such instances were few and far between and were more public relation exercises for furthering support, especially in India, rather than genuine offers of praise or thanks. Churchill, *The Grand Alliance*, Appendix C, Churchill to Maharaja Jam Sahib of Nawanagar, on 24 March 1941, p. 667.

<sup>142</sup> See Byron Farwell, *Armies of the Raj: From the Great Indian Mutiny to Independence, 1885–1947* (London: Viking, 1989), pp. 292–302; Sundaram, 'Grudging Concessions', pp. 88–101; Daniel Marston, 'A Force Transformed: The Indian Army and the Second World War', in Marston and Sundaram (eds), *A Military History of India and South Asia*, pp. 102–22; Sharpe, 'The Indianisation of the Indian Army'; and Tinker, 'India in the First World War and after', pp. 89–107.

<sup>143</sup> See David E. Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860–1940* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994; repr. 1998), pp. 153–91.

<sup>144</sup> Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, p. 511.

appointed supreme commander of the ill-fated American, British, Dutch and Australian (ABDA) forces who would later be made Viceroy of India, wrote to Churchill to tell him 'on behalf of the Army in India' the 'achievements of the first two divisions sent abroad by India during this war'.<sup>145</sup> Wavell told how the 4<sup>th</sup> Indian Division fighting in Cyprus and the 5<sup>th</sup> Indian Division in the Western Desert had 'well maintained their reputation and more than held their own in hard fought actions' against Rommel's troops.<sup>146</sup> What is most striking is that, compared to Churchill's portrayal of the Indian Army, Wavell favourably likened the Indian soldiers to hand-picked German troops. He therefore implied that whilst the Indian troops had been, at the start of the war, ill-prepared, poorly armed and relatively untrained, their capacity for quick and decisive action, their willingness to learn from mistakes, and their talent at adapting to varied and differing battlefield conditions, implied that their ability outweighed not only Rommel's troops but also some of the British troops themselves.<sup>147</sup>

In November 1942, Wavell would once again encourage Churchill to consider 'sending a special message to armed forces in India Command' as a token of his appreciation would 'greatly hearten them' at a time when successes in North Africa made the Indian troops 'feel a little out of the picture'.<sup>148</sup> The legacy of the mutinies of 1857 and 1915 had convinced some British officers of the Indian Army's potential for disloyalty. By the end of 1942 however, this had changed and Indian troops were 'far more wholeheartedly trusted'.<sup>149</sup> As the political situation had changed in India, with the promise of self-government to

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<sup>145</sup> CHAR 20/62/31: Wavell to Churchill, 15 June 1942.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> This ability to adapt to various battlefield conditions and terrains, and to learn from previous mistakes, was a point made by Ashley Jackson, Dr C. Mann, Col. G. Dunlop and Alan Jeffreys in their respective papers presented at the Second Joint Military History Conference (Imperial War Museum and King's College London) *The Indian Army, 1939–1947*, 9 May 2009. See also Pradeep Barua, 'Strategies and Doctrines of Imperial Defence: Britain and India, 1919–1945', *JICH*, 25/2 (1997), pp. 241–66.

<sup>148</sup> CHAR 20/83/15: Wavell to Churchill, 16 Nov. 1942.

<sup>149</sup> Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, p. 469.



be seriously discussed and awarded after the war, the manner in which the Indian Army was trusted and accepted also changed.<sup>150</sup> Whilst the British were determined to keep the colonial Indian Army depoliticized,<sup>151</sup> and attempted to keep Jawans insulated from events in India, the Indian Army had never 'been so trusted' and had repaid that 'trust so superbly'.<sup>152</sup> The belief in the superiority of the British soldier over the Indian soldier proved to be outmoded, misplaced and wrong. As one historian wrote, 'gone were the days when it had been supposed that the example of British troops was needed to fire Indians to valour'.<sup>153</sup> Yet in his memoirs Churchill still maintained this outdated credo.

While the fourth and fifth volumes of his memoirs were being hastily drafted and revised, Churchill was more concerned with his future political career and how to bury his wartime mistakes rather than with a truthful recounting of his tale. One such mistake regarding the Indian Army was his opinion, expressed in July 1943 that 'all expansion' should 'be stopped' and that 'there should be substantial reduction to the existing number'.<sup>154</sup> Had the expansion been stopped, as Churchill urged (even if he had also argued that 'quality was better than quantity'), the Indian Army in Burma (as well as in every other theatre of war) would have been significantly reduced, with the knock-on effect of delaying victory in the war against Japan.<sup>155</sup> If this had come to light in his memoirs, it would have shown how rarely he glanced eastwards during the war as well as the fact that he did not take American strategic concerns in the Far East as seriously as he claimed. Churchill was certainly not

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p. 469–70.

<sup>151</sup> Various ways to isolate the Indian troops from the political unrest in India were undertaken: postal censorship, only British newspapers available within camps, and the dissemination of Allied war-effort propaganda through the use of mobile film units and radio programmes. See Sanjoy Bhattacharya, 'British Military Information Management Techniques and the South Asian Soldier: Eastern India during the Second World War', *MAS*, 34/2 (2000), pp. 483–510.

<sup>152</sup> Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, p. 513.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p. 509.

<sup>154</sup> CHAR 20/128/5: Churchill to Amery, 10 July 1943.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

prepared to reveal his disregard and distrust for the Indian Army so blatantly, as the consequence – for contemporary Anglo-American relations – would have been dire.

Contrary to the overwhelmingly negative portrayal of the Indian Army in his memoirs, Churchill did, in a handful of instances, acknowledge its success and singled it out for praise. In January 1944, Churchill drafted a message to be published in the first edition of the *South East Asia Command* newspaper. The message included his 'best wishes' for the success of the paper and stated that 'soldiers of the Fourteenth Army as well as sailors and airmen now serving under Admiral Mountbatten have already won for themselves distinction in battle'. He encouraged the men to think of the 'comprehension of great issues which [lay] in their hands' and that he was sure that they would 'acquit themselves with the audacity, the valour and the resourcefulness' which Britain now required.<sup>156</sup> Whilst Churchill acknowledged, and encouraged, the Fourteenth Army in this message, it must be noted that in the following two months, he also drafted similar encouraging messages to General de Gaulle (on the success of the French troops near Cassino), to the National Farmers Union and to the National Savings Committee.<sup>157</sup> All of which indicate that the Fourteenth Army, and its Indian troops, were lauded as a special force by Churchill only when it suited him. As Callahan commented, Churchill showed only a 'brief flare of interest' in the Indian Army during the last two years of the war,<sup>158</sup> and only when it suited his purpose to do so.

Churchill's 'brief' interest in the Indian Army 'flared' again towards the end of 1944, when he became concerned about the morale and welfare of troops in the Far East. He felt it 'essential' that he should keep in close contact with Mountbatten as he regarded the campaigns being waged in Burma as having an

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<sup>156</sup> CHAR 4/401/18: Message from Churchill for the South East Asia Command Newspaper, 10 Jan. 1944.

<sup>157</sup> CHUR 4/401/20: Churchill to De Gaulle, 4 Feb. 1944; CHUR 4/401/19: Churchill to National Farmers' Union, 25 Jan. 1944; and CHUR 4/401/22: Churchill to the National Savings Committee, 20 March 1944.

<sup>158</sup> Raymond Callahan, 'Churchill and the Indian Army', *The Indian Army, 1939–1947*, 9 May 2009.

important effect on the 'welfare and morale of the British forces in the Far Eastern theatres of war'.<sup>159</sup> Churchill wanted the 'best possible conditions for the men and women serving in the war against Japan'.<sup>160</sup> Yet Churchill once again reverted to type and made a disparaging distinction between British and Indian (as well as African) troops. Churchill called for a 'new view' to be taken,<sup>161</sup> where the aim would be to 'provide British sailors, soldiers, and airmen with a standard of amenities as close to that enjoyed by American troops'.<sup>162</sup> However Churchill wrote that whilst 'Indian and Colonial troops must receive full consideration', the 'improvements in the amenities for British troops must not be held back because they cannot be fully extended to troops more accustomed to the climate and to local conditions'.<sup>163</sup> In other words, what started out as a promising and potential change in Churchill's regard for the Indian Army was only to be dashed again.

In May 1945, Amery wrote that he hoped Churchill would

find time for a talk with Auchinleck and learn from him something of the real efficiency behind the front line of the Indian Army, as well as something of his plans for the future, both as to the Indian Army proper and as to his ideas for a British strategic reserve.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> CHAR 20/175/61: Churchill to Mountbatten, 21 Nov. 1944.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> It may not be too unfair to write that Churchill was calling for a review of conditions, for British troops in the Far East, as he knew that demobilisation, once victory against Japan was complete, would be a lengthy process and with his forward look to a general election at the end of the war he was hoping to 'ameliorate conditions of service' to ensure he received the soon to be ex-serviceman's vote. CHAR 20/175/62: Churchill to Mountbatten, 21 Nov. 1944.

<sup>162</sup> CHAR 20/175/62: Churchill to Mountbatten, 21 Nov. 1944.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> CHAR 20/195/80: Amery to Ismay, 8 May 1945.

Amery's remark illustrates how Churchill had clearly not changed his outdated, imperialistic, and disdainful regard for the Indian Army by the end of the Second World War. When it came to writing his memoirs, and the pivotal role which the Indian Army had played in the reconquest of Burma resurfaced, it became one issue that Churchill would gladly gloss over. Churchill made it clear in his preface to *Closing the Ring* that he had 'found it necessary ... to practise compression and selection in an increasing degree'.<sup>165</sup> No doubt the advent of Indian (as well as Burmese) independence contributed to his snubbing of the Indian Army's achievements; but, as he wrote his memoirs to aid his return to Downing Street, Churchill felt he had to gloss over and secure Britain's ability to enter the Cold War as one of the main players. He could not do this without pandering to wartime, as well as contemporary, American sensibilities.

Churchill had been humiliated by the events in wartime Burma. The country which his father had annexed in 1885 had always been rather neglected by the British Empire—it was thought of as impenetrable due to its extensive mountain ranges and intemperate climate, and it was cut off from the Pacific.<sup>166</sup> Churchill was also humiliated by the events of post-war Burma as even though his imperial rhetoric came out in force, it was merely hollow rhetoric as he could not realistically oppose the move to grant Burma independence. Burma had been devastated during the Japanese occupation. Its integral industries and exports (teak, oil, and rice) contributed a minimal amount to Britain's sterling balance deficit. Post-war Burma required a huge amount of investment which, because of the virtually negligible return that Britain would receive, meant that it was not a viable option to retain Burma as part of the 'new' Commonwealth. Churchill may have been verbose about the influence Burma's independence would have on India, but he was nonetheless realistic over Burma. He needed to hide, or at least deflect attention from how, his swift, yet pragmatic, U-turn had come about without too much inner turmoil. Writing about the reconquest of Burma between 1947 and 1950 (and adhering to a strict word limit) allowed Churchill to side-step his own failure: that he could not stop Burma being relinquished by the

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<sup>165</sup> Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, p. ix–x.

<sup>166</sup> See illustration VI which illustrates how the Japanese surprised the British in Malaya, Singapore and Burma by penetrating the jungles, p. 238.

British Empire although, in practical and economic terms, he may not have wanted to. Perhaps it was merely the pace at which the empire relinquished its hold on Burma to which Churchill truly objected.

Burma had hit one of Churchill's raw nerves: the Indian Army had proved itself to be a formidable fighting unit—one without which Burma would have not been (if only temporarily) regained.<sup>167</sup> Burma had also been almost totally unprepared for an invasion and had proved incapable of defending itself. As Burma had been viewed by Churchill as an 'appendage' to India then it followed that, despite all his prevarications to the contrary, he had not been overly concerned over India's protection from attack either. But more importantly for Churchill's post-war status, Burma proved how fragile and temporary the Anglo-American wartime 'special relationship' had been. Churchill's legendary pen manipulated history at the expense of the Indian Army as Burma had proved to be the 'tale of the rejection of one strategic plan after another because the American and British purposes were so divergent'<sup>168</sup> Prasad, Bhargava and Khera may have written the official history of the Indian Army in 1958, but its accuracy and style were never heard above Churchill's more powerful and verbose effort. The Indian Tiger had struck, it had killed, and it had triumphed.<sup>169</sup> The wartime history was there for Churchill to include and expand upon, yet he chose not to.

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<sup>167</sup> Burma became independent (as opposed to being granted and, of course, accepting Dominion status and remaining within the Commonwealth) in January 1948.

<sup>168</sup> Prasad, Bhargava and Khera, *Reconquest of Burma, Vol. 1*, p. xxv.

<sup>169</sup> See Government of India publications, *The Tiger Strikes: The Story Of Indian Troops In North Africa And East Africa* (London: HMSO, 1942); *The Tiger Kills: The Story Of British And Indian Troops With The 8<sup>th</sup> Army In North Africa* (London: HMSO, 1944); and *The Tiger Triumphs: The Story Of Three Great Divisions in Italy* (London: HMSO, 1946).

**Illustration VI**



‘I repeat sir, the Japs are no sportsmen—it’s always been clearly understood that these jungles are strictly impenetrable’.

Osbert Lancaster, *Daily Express*, 20 Jan. 1942

## Epilogue: Hiding Behind History

Churchill mythologised the Anglo-American ‘special relationship’ in his memoirs.<sup>1</sup> He grafted Britain’s post-war economic, cultural and intellectual links with America onto the wartime ‘special relationship’—a relationship which he cemented at Fulton, Missouri, in March 1946. Having shown the world how sturdy a construct the Anglo-American alliance was in 1946, Churchill then set about hastily laying its foundations through the medium of his memoirs. The problem he then encountered was that the wartime ‘special relationship’ had not actually been all that ‘special’, particularly when he recollected the war in the Far East, or the British Empire east of Suez. Writing in November 1952, after he had achieved his ambition of a return to Downing Street as peacetime prime minister of Britain, Churchill was very much aware that he had to still tread carefully with the Americans: ‘of course we have not got permission to publish letters and telegrams from Ike and Truman. I do not intend to print anything they would object to’.<sup>2</sup> Since Churchill was aware of the fragility of the union between the English-speaking peoples in the post-war world, it meant that, when reconstructing the wartime world for his memoirs, he had to be even more circumspect.

Fortunately Churchill had not frequently looked eastwards during the war because his imperial rhetoric – a caricature of his own invention during the 1930s when he had been in his ‘political wilderness’ – had prevented him from doing so. After all, in March 1941, Churchill had written that:

I do not think Japan is likely to attack us unless and until she is sure we are going to be defeated. I doubt very much whether she would come into the war on the side of the Axis Powers if the United States joined us. She would

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<sup>1</sup> ‘The Sinews of Peace’, Churchill, Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri, 5 Mar. 1946, in Randolph S. Churchill (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: Post-war Speeches, The Sinews of Peace* (London: Cassell, 1948), p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> CHUR 4/25A/57: Churchill to Ismay, 15 Nov. 1952.

certainly be very foolish to do so. It would be more sensible for her to come in if the United States did not join us.<sup>3</sup>

Less than twelve months later, America entered the war due to the twisted steel and burning oil of Pearl Harbor. Hong Kong, Malaya and Singapore were lost to the British Empire. Burma was in the midst of invasion, and Churchill's unimagined horror, an India on the brink of invasion and almost at the point of rebelling, had come to pass. 1942 was the hinge upon which the outcome of the war teetered. This was no less true when Churchill came to recollect this momentous year for his memoirs.

Churchill knew that wartime sacrifices in the Far East would be inevitable. As chapter four has shown, Britain's loss of the battle for Hong Kong was a foregone conclusion; and once the flagship of the British Empire's prestige in the Far East was lost, it was inevitable that Malaya and Burma would also fall like so many imperial dominos. The garrison at Singapore appeared to be the exception. The interwar British governments had done such a wonderful job in creating the image of an unassailable 'fortress' that even the wartime prime minister was shocked and appalled by the 'worst disaster' when it inevitably arrived.<sup>4</sup> Churchill's imperialism was revealed as hollow, and his imperial rhetoric as empty. But all this did not stop him from declaring in November 1942 that he had 'not become the King's first minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire'.<sup>5</sup> Issued as a warning to the British Empire's troublesome imperial subjects as well as to his American allies, Churchill's imperial 'mission statement' also hoped to rouse the empire from its slumber. An allied victory, he hoped, would also be an imperial victory. He sought to show that the wartime cost of Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore and Burma to the

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<sup>3</sup> CHUR 4/212/68-9: Churchill notes, 4 Mar. 1941.

<sup>4</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Volume IV, The Hinge of Fate* (London: Cassell, 1951), p. 81.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Rhodes James (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches: Volume VI, 1935-1942* (New York: Chelsea House, 1974), Churchill, Mansion House speech, London, 10 Nov. 1942, p. 6695.



Japanese would be a heavy, but nonetheless temporary, price to pay. Churchill, once again, assumed the mantle of the unrepentant Victorian imperialist.

What Churchill did not envisage was how integral war-time American anti-imperialist sentiment would become to the future of the British Empire east of Suez. He had known since 1912, when he had been First Sea Lord, that:

If the power of Great Britain were shattered upon the sea, the only course open to the 5,000,000 of white men in the Pacific would be to seek the protection of the United States.<sup>6</sup>

America would become the last defence of the British Empire in the Far East if war were to break out for Britain simultaneously in the Mediterranean and in the Far East. The premiums for the insurance policy of the ‘Singapore Strategy’ of the 1920s were far too high, and successive governments (in one of which Churchill had been Chancellor of the Exchequer) had failed to pay them.<sup>7</sup> Placing the onus for the outbreak of war upon American economic and diplomatic failures, as chapter three has shown, enabled Churchill to side-step the way in which the British Empire had consistently antagonised Japan. The Atlantic Charter marked the start of American pressure on the British Empire to re-think its post-war imperial motivation. When coupled with pressure from the Left in Britain, as well as from Congress leaders themselves, the relentless pressure for imperial change culminated in Churchill sending Stafford Cripps to India with an offer of post-war independence. His portrayal of his acceptance of American pressure, and American strategy in the Far East overall, as chapter five

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<sup>6</sup> Randolph S. Churchill (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: Companion Volume II, Part 3, 1911–1914* (London: Heinemann, 1969), memorandum by Churchill, c. Feb. 1912, p. 1512.

<sup>7</sup> See Brian P. Farrell, ‘Churchill and Imperial Defence 1926–1940: Putting Singapore in Perspective’, in Brian P. Farrell (ed.), *Churchill and the Lion City: Shaping Modern Singapore* (Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2011), p. 40.

has demonstrated, enabled Churchill to omit how the ‘special relationship’ had started to stress and strain.

The discernible wartime friction between the English-speaking peoples became palpable over Burma. Chapter six has shown how Churchill hid behind the history of the war east of Suez, albeit quite willingly, as it enabled him to vent his frustrations on the Indian Army, in order to hide the temporary and volatile nature of Anglo-American relations. It was easy for Churchill to rail against the Indian Army and India itself. It proved even easier, and far preferable, for Churchill to rant against an independent India, and the Indian Army, rather than to show the true nature of the ‘special relationship’. Churchill wanted power again for himself, but he altruistically wanted it for Britain and her New Commonwealth of Nations too. Facilitating the not-so ‘special relationship’, and turning a blind eye to its foibles and quirks, could possibly help him secure both.

On 22 December 1941, a little over two weeks after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Churchill arrived in Washington. A press conference was held the following day. One American journalist asked Churchill whether Singapore was the ‘key to the whole situation out there’. Churchill replied that the ‘key’ was the ‘resolute manner in which the British and American Democracies’ would ‘throw themselves into the conflict’.<sup>8</sup> He thought this was the key in December 1941 to defeating the Japanese. When it came to writing his post-war memoirs, the key to his contemporary Cold War concerns was to not reveal that the resolute manner in which the English-speaking peoples had fought alongside each other had simply been a temporary wartime alliance. Churchill needed to mythologize the ‘special relationship’ so that his wartime role as its progenitor would emphasize how relevant he remained to international relations.

The ‘staggering’ news of Churchill’s defeat in the general election of July 1945, left Harry Hopkins (one of Roosevelt’s closest advisors) commenting that Churchill had ‘been a gallant fighter and his deeds will go down in Anglo-Saxon history for all time’.<sup>9</sup> Churchill’s efforts at carefully constructing his narrative of the war made sure of this and, as Reynolds has observed, ‘for a while Churchill

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<sup>8</sup> Martin Gilbert, *Road to Victory: Winston S. Churchill, 1941–1945* (London: Heinemann, 1986), p. 25.

<sup>9</sup> ISMAY 4/18/15: Harry Hopkins to Ismay, 28 July 1945.

almost turned time on its head: such was his command of history'.<sup>10</sup> Regarding the war in the Far East, this still holds partly true; and, by building upon Reynolds' work on the memoirs, this thesis hopes to have relocated the war in the Pacific into Churchill's major narrative of the world war. The war against Japan was not an easy tale for Churchill to tell because it revealed personal and national weaknesses and mistakes. Most importantly for Churchill however, the post-war context of his narration of the war against Japan meant that he had to downplay these errors as much as possible. Churchill invited and encouraged Ismay and other members of the syndicate to fill in the gaps in his memory: 'Your comments as usual, are most considered and helpful. My memory is thus refreshed to tell this part of our tale'.<sup>11</sup> But Churchill did not want his memory to be as 'refreshed' on the war in the Far East because of the potential impact it might have had on his contemporary situation.

In 1936 Churchill was made an Honorary Vice-President of the Royal Historical Society for his four-volume biography of his ancestor John Churchill, the first Duke of Marlborough.<sup>12</sup> He was now officially considered an historian. Of the four points which 'might be called a basic code of historical practice' Churchill certainly conformed to two.<sup>13</sup> Churchill accepted the 'possibility of revision of particular interpretations in the light of further evidence'.<sup>14</sup> In the preface to the first volume of the *Second World War*, he wrote that whilst 'every possible care' had been taken 'to verify the facts', much was 'constantly coming to light' and this meant that a 'new aspect to the conclusion' could happen.<sup>15</sup> Churchill also relished the 'commitment to enjoyment of the creativity of the historian'.<sup>16</sup> Although it could be argued that he enjoyed the 'creativity of the

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<sup>10</sup> Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. xxvi.

<sup>11</sup> ISMAY 2/3/163: Churchill to Ismay, 10 July 1949.

<sup>12</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *Marlborough: His Life and Times, Volumes I–IV* (London: Harrap, 1933–38).

<sup>13</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *Historical Theory* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 50.

<sup>14</sup> Fulbrook, *Historical Theory*, p. 50.

<sup>15</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Volume I, The Gathering Storm* (London: Cassell, 1948), p. viii.

<sup>16</sup> Fulbrook, *Historical Theory*, p. 50.

historian' for its end results – the financial rewards and, in the case of his wartime memoirs, the resurgence in his popularity and a return to power at 10 Downing Street – he nonetheless enjoyed wielding his pen. His compelling language is evidence of that. There was also a 'commitment to basic honesty and integrity rather than deceit' in Churchill's memoirs.<sup>17</sup> The syndicate (most notably Deakin, Kelly, Pownall, Allen and Ismay) ensured the 'basic honesty and integrity' of the memoirs, as did the Cabinet Secretaries Edward Bridges and Norman Brook.

The final point of the historian's code of conduct is concerned with the 'absence of wilful distortion or omissions'.<sup>18</sup> It is upon the 'wilful' gaps and omissions within Churchill's narrative of the war in the Far East that this thesis has been based. Literary revisions indicate an author's indecision, and this thesis has examined the revisions that appear in the draft chapters, proofs and galleys of Churchill's memoirs. Churchill claimed that his memoirs were not history, but that they were merely a 'contribution' to history written from the perspective of one who had played a major role in events.<sup>19</sup> The official historian of the syndicate, Bill Deakin, claimed that:

Winston's attitude to the war memoirs was 'this is not history, this is my case'. He made it absolutely clear that it was *his* case he was making. It was an anthology—with his own papers—not a history.<sup>20</sup>

Anthology or not, Churchill's memoirs arguably became the most influential memoirs of the twentieth century. To debate whether Churchill was, or was not, an historian is to miss the essential point that this thesis has made about his memoir of the Second World War: the 'broad avenues' that Churchill's portrayal

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Churchill, *Gathering Storm*, p. vii.

<sup>20</sup> Sir William Deakin in conversation with Martin Gilbert, 15 Mar. 1975 in Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill: 1945–1965: Volume 8: Never Despair* (London: Heinemann, 1988), p. 315.

placed over the war between the British Empire and Japan has kept this significant part of the conflict on the periphery of both collective memory and of mainstream history. Perhaps because of the long shadow of Churchill's memoirs, it is only comparatively recently that the 'forgotten armies' who fought the 'forgotten war' have been appropriately remembered.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Armies: Britain's Asian Empire and the War with Japan* (London: Penguin, 2005); and *Forgotten Wars: The End of Britain's Asian Empire* (London: Allen Lane, 2007).

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Army officer. Harrow and Sandhurst. 1911 commissioned into the Irish Guards. Highly decorated during the First World War. Rapid promotion: 1914, Lieutenant (serving in France); 1918, acting Brigadier-General in command of the retreat from Arras. 1937, Major-General. 1939 in France under Sir John Dill. A favourite of Churchill's (although not shown off to the same extent as Wingate). February 1942, sent to Burma, withdrew from Rangoon into India and established good links with the Americans and with the Chinese. August 1942, appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Middle East. January 1943, attended the Casablanca Conference. Directed the final victory in Tunis and was then sent to Italy where his skill as a military strategist became visible. Made Supreme Allied Commander of the Mediterranean Theatre 1944–45. Appointed Field-Marshal in December 1944 (although it was backdated to June 1944 when the allies entered Rome).

### **AMERY, LEOPOLD CHARLES MAURICE STENNETT (1873–1955)**

Politician and journalist. Harrow and Oxford. Fellowship in History at All-Souls whilst a journalist for *The Times*. Ardent believer in the British Empire. Conservative MP for South Birmingham 1911–45. Served as an Intelligence Officer in Flanders during the First World War. 1919 Under-Secretary to the Colonial Office. 1922, First Lord of the Admiralty—presided over the plans and initial stages of the construction of the naval base at Singapore. Appointed Secretary to the Colonies 1924–29 (at the same time Churchill was holding the Treasury's purse). Secretary of State for India during Churchill's wartime Coalition government led to continual frustration: some with Congress leaders but mostly with Churchill's attitude towards self-government for India.

**ASQUITH, HERBERT HENRY (1852–1928)**

Lawyer and QC from 1890. Liberal MP for East Fife in 1886. Appointed as Home Secretary in Gladstone's fourth Liberal government in 1892. Served under Rosebery (who was appointed PM after Gladstone resigned) in 1894, and then Harcourt and Campbell-Bannerman. Joined, and later became Vice-President, of the Liberal Imperial League and helped draft the Liberal Leagues 1902 manifesto but was against the way matter of empire disrupted party unity. Appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer (1905–08) and after Campbell-Bannerman's ill health forced him to resign, Asquith became PM. He promoted Churchill to the Board of Trade. Term as PM ended in 1916 when Lloyd George succeeded him.

**ATTLEE, CLEMENT RICHARD, FIRST EARL ATTLEE (1883–1967)**

Labour Politician. Educated Haileybury College and Oxford. Called to the bar in 1906. Served in Gallipoli and the Mesopotamia during the First World War. 1917, made rank of Major. 1922, Labour MP for Limehouse and became Ramsay MacDonald's Parliamentary Private Secretary. Then served as Under-Secretary for War in 1924. Key member of the Simon Commission 1927–30. deputised as the leader of the Labour Party 1933–4; outright leader in October 1935. Leader of the Labour group in Churchill's wartime coalition. PM of the Labour Government with an overwhelming majority in July 1945. Resigned after his general election defeat in October 1951.

**AUCHINLECK, CLAUDE JOHN EYRE (1884–1981)**

Army Officer. Wellington and Sandhurst. 1904 commissioned into the 62<sup>nd</sup> Punjabis in India. 1914–15: Turkey; 1916–18: Mesopotamia. 1917, awarded DSO. 1919, Staff College at Quetta. 1927, Imperial Defence College. 1930–33 returned to Quetta as an instructor. 1933, commander of the Peshawar Brigade, subsequently promoted to Major-General. 1936 became Deputy Chief of the General Staff. 1938–39, integral member of the Chatfield Committee, tirelessly endorsed the Indianization of the Indian Army. After a brief spell in Norway (1940) he was replaced (by Montgomery), made Commander-in-Chief in India in 1941 and in turn he replaced Wavell. Was sent to the Middle East by Churchill

(with whom he had a tense relationship) from 1941–43, and then back to India (when Wavell was made Viceroy) from 1943–47. Known affectionately by those he commanded as ‘The Auk’ his archive papers (presented to Manchester University in 1967) illustrate how highly he thought of the Indian troops under his command and how secure he was in his knowledge that the Indian Army was a superb fighting force. Worked closely with the Americans and Chinese in the Burma theatre, was praised as an exemplary soldier, and after realising the dire situation of the Indian Army in a post-Partition and post-Independent India (and amid rapidly deteriorating relations with Mountbatten) he retired in September 1947.

**BALDWIN, STANLEY, EARL BALDWIN OF BEWDLEY (1867–1947)**

Politician. Conservative MP for Bewdley, PM of a Conservative government from 22 May 1923 to 22 January 1924. He resigned as the Conservatives failed to secure a majority in the general election of November 1923. The Conservatives achieved their majority in the general election of October 1924 and Baldwin became PM for a second time from 4 November 1924 to 4 June 1929, when he resigned to avoid disaffected Conservative voters from creating a revival in Liberal Party support. Baldwin’s final term as PM was as head of the National Government from 7 June 1935 to 28 May 1937 when his ill health forced him to resign. Created Earl Baldwin of Bewdley and founded the Imperial Relations Trust.

**BALFOUR, ARTHUR JAMES, FIRST EARL OF BALFOUR (1848–1930)**

Conservative politician. Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge. Nephew of Lord Robert Cecil. Elected as Conservative MP for Hertford in 1874. Achieved prominence as Chief Secretary for Ireland 1887–91 with his decision to prosecute Parnell and his Irish Nationalists. 1891, Leader of the House of Commons (and opposition leader in 1892). Became PM in 1902 (when he succeeded Lord Salisbury) and resigned his office due to his electoral defeat in December 1905. A full member of the Committee of Imperial Defence during the First World War and First Lord of the Admiralty from 1915–16 he backed the

Dardanelles strategy. Foreign Secretary from 1916 till 1919 but mostly known for the Balfour declaration of 1917 which supported the need for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Retired from the Commons in 1922.

**BARING, THOMAS GEORGE, LORD NORTHBROOK (1826–1904)**

Inherited title of Lord Northbrook in 1866; ‘always true to his reforming Whig origins’, he served in the Admiralty, the India Office, the War Office and then the Home Office before being offered the position of Viceroy of India by Gladstone (following the previous Viceroy’s assassination – Lord Minto) in 1872. Viewed the British administration in India differently to Salisbury but succeeded in arguing that the advice of those on the spot should at least be heard. Conflicted with Salisbury over Indian cotton duties issue but both men agreed on the threat that Indian Muslims posed to the Raj (Minto’s assassin had been a Muslim).

**BEVIN, ERNEST (1881–1951)**

Labour politician and Trade Unionist. No Eton or Oxbridge education for Bevin, He had no privileged background and worked from an early age. 1911 he was an official for the Dockers Union and worked his way up to General-Secretary of the Transport and General Worker’s Union by 1922. Elected to the general council of the Trade Unions Congress in 1925, he ensured that once the General Strike ended, fair terms for TUC members were brought about. Minister of Labour during the Second World War within Churchill’s coalition government. Under Attlee’s Labour government Bevin was appointed as Foreign Secretary (a sharp contrast to the tailored and well heeled Anthony Eden) but was arguably a successful Foreign Secretary (Berlin blockade, America in Korea). Overwhelming impression received from his archive papers (Churchill Archive Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge) is that he was a forthright, fair, respected and generous man.

**BROOKE, ALAN FRANCIS, LORD ALANBROOKE (1883–1963)**

Army officer. Woolwich. 1902 joined RFA. 1917 Canadian corps, 1918–19 1<sup>st</sup> Army. 1923–7, instructor at Staff College, Camberley. 1927 Imperial Defence College. 1934–5, commander of the 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry brigade. 1938–39 commander of AA Corps. 1939–40 commanded II corps in France. 1941–6, commander of Imperial General Staff. Diarist who was not afraid to balk against Churchill in public as well as in his diaries.

**CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN, HENRY (1836–1908)**

Liberal MP for Stirling Burghs in 1868; financial secretary to the War Office in 1871; Irish Chief Secretary in 1884; then Secretary of State for War in Gladstone's third government in 1886. Returned to War Office in 1892 (for Gladstone's fourth government) and, when Rosebery succeeded Gladstone as PM in 1894, Campbell-Bannerman retained his Cabinet position. Following Harcourt's relatively unsuccessful leadership of the Liberal Party, Campbell-Bannerman was voted Liberal leader of the Commons in 1899. After the Boer War, the Liberals split into two factions (Campbell-Bannerman against Rosebery). Due to Rosebery's increasing isolation, and Balfour's resignation, Campbell-Bannerman selected a Liberal Cabinet at the King's command and was then elected PM in January 1906. Ill health forced him to resign in April 1908.

**CHIANG, KAI-SHEK (1887–1975)**

Influential member of the Chinese Nationalist Party (the Kuomintang), and a conservative anti-Communist. Chairman of the Nationalist League of China 1928–1931. Established himself as the Chairman of the National Military Council 1932–1946. Despite accusations of cowardice, stock piling of essential goods and profiteering from both his own party and the Allies, he worked closely with the Allied forces during the Second World War in the hope of ridding China of Japanese aggression (Manchuria had been invaded and occupied by Japanese force in 1937). Relations were never cordial between the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) but until the Japanese surrendered the tension between the two sides worked towards this common aim. After the Japanese

surrender relations deteriorated further and after the CPC defeated the Nationalists, Chiang Kai-Shek was forced to relocate to Taiwan where he declared himself the President of the Republic of China from 1950 until he died in 1975.

**CHURCHILL, LORD RANDOLPH SPENCER (1849–1895)**

Conservative MP for Woodstock from 1874–1885. American wife (Jennie Jerome). Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1877. Strong advocate of the legislative union between Ireland and Britain. But believed that Ireland should be granted a local form of self-government, yet he was a firm opponent to the proposed offer of Irish Home Rule. Leading member of the so-called Fourth Party upon return from Ireland. Pragmatic and realistic, known for his oratorical skill and manipulation of the press. Established a strong position for himself within the Conservative Party by the mid 1880s. 1885, Lord Randolph was made Secretary of State for India. Keen to promote the security of India, and welcomed attempts at international diplomacy with Russia. Persuaded Parliament to grant extra financial resources to bolster India's security, and secured the annexation of Upper Burma. Salisbury's Conservative replacement government was soon narrowly defeated (by Gladstone) and Lord Randolph stood for election at the safe Conservative seat at South Paddington (1885–1894). Gladstone and his Liberals needed Irish Nationalist support and so the policy of Irish Home Rule was once again in the fore. Lord Randolph had to accept that Home Rule was inevitable. Made Chancellor of the Exchequer by Salisbury in 1886 (after the defeat of Gladstone and the Liberals at another general election) and then became Leader of the House of Commons in 1887 (holding both positions simultaneously for a short while). At the Exchequer he called for a reduction in defence expenditure and, when it was not forthcoming, he resigned from his ministerial post. Poor health, his anti-Home Rule stance, and growing unpopularity also contributed to his resignation being so readily accepted.

**CRIPPS, STAFFORD (1889–1952)**

Winchester and University College, London. Ambulance driver in France during First World War. Flirted with Marxist theory and expelled from the Labour Party due to his anti-appeasement stance in 1939. 1940 appointed British Ambassador to Moscow. Then return to be dispatched on the Mission to India in March 1942. Later made Minister of Aircraft Production. And in 1945 rejoined the Labour Party. 1945–47, President of the Board of Trade in Attlee's Labour government. 1947 brief time as Minister of Economic Affairs. 1947–50 Chancellor of the Exchequer. Churchill was overhead to have said when Cripps once walked past him 'There but for the grace of god, goes God!'

**DISRAELI, BENJAMIN (1804–1881)**

A moderately successful novelist who, having opposed Whig policy, become a self-styled radical and was elected as the Conservative MP for Maidstone in 1837 and then Buckinghamshire in 1847. Disraeli was convinced about the importance of knowing one's history and saw a clear connection between British history and the Empire; to which he was totally committed. After the Indian Mutiny of 1857, Disraeli called for 'a more direct, imposing, imaginative, and sympathetic tone to British rule in India'. Prime Minister from February to December 1868 and then, after Gladstone's electoral defeat, from 1874 till 1876. After his second term as Prime Minister he became primarily concerned with protecting British India from attack and the so-called Russian threat.

**ELGIN, LORD VICTOR ALEXANDER BRUCE, NINTH EARL OF ELGIN AND THIRTEEN EARL OF KINCARDINE (1849–1917)**

Chairman of the Scottish Liberal Association in 1881 and a firm supporter of Gladstone's policies (especially on Home Rule for Ireland). Viceroy of India from 1894–95. Returned to Britain, successful chairing of three public enquiries saw him promoted to Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs from December 1905 to April 1908. Elgin appreciated the desires for self-government coming from the Indian Nationalists, but he did not believe that India was read for any such responsibility. Asquith became PM in April 1908, and Elgin was replaced.



**FISHER, JOHN ARBUTHNOT (1841–1920)**

Joined the Navy in 1854. Swiftly promoted: Lieutenant in 1862 and then Gunnery-Lieutenant in 1863. Ordered to China where his success was rewarded with his promotion to flag captain of the armoured ship the *Hercules* in 1878. Took part in the annexation of Egypt in 1882, was on hand throughout the Panjdeh Scare of 1884 and was then made a Lord of the Admiralty in 1892. Promoted to a full Admiral in 1901 and was committed to naval reform in that he scrapped obsolete warships and instituted the dreadnought programme of ship building. Under Campbell-Bannerman's Liberal government he was promoted to Admiral of the Fleet in December 1905. He retired in 1910 (after a scandal involving his acrimonious working relationship with Beresford who was Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean fleet) but a correspondence with WSC ensured that Fisher (despite reservations from within the Admiralty) returned as First Sea Lord in October 1914. He initially condoned the Dardanelles campaign, but then hastily resigned from his post once he saw the futility of it in May 1915.

**GANDHI, MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND (1869–1948)**

Trained as a barrister in London, returned to India, worked in South Africa (encountered Smuts) whilst defending Indian work force. Attracted millions of followers for his 'devotion to truth' movement (satyagraha) and its non-violent nature. 1920, dominant figure in Indian nationalist politics. Hated by Churchill because of what he symbolised (an independent India). 1922 imprisoned for six years. 1931 attended Round Table conference in London. 1934 resigned from Congress over its use of non-violence as a political tool. Saw the horrors of Partition but physically helped in trying to restore order and peace to India. Assassinated 1948.

**LLOYD GEORGE, DAVID (1863–1945)**

Welsh radical who (after becoming a solicitor in 1884 and narrowly defeating his Conservative opponent in a by-election for the marginal set of Caernarfon

Boroughs in 1890) became a spokesman for Liberal values. He held a series of various ministerial posts (President of the Board of Trade from January 1906 to April 1908; Chancellor of the Exchequer from April 1908 to May 1915; Minister of Munitions from May 1915 to July 1916) before becoming Prime Minister (PM) of a Coalition Government from 6 Dec., 1916 to 14 Dec., 1918. Following the general election of December 1918, the Coalition Government was returned with Lloyd George as PM until 19 Oct., 1922. In spite of the fascination with his notorious private life, historians have reassessed his political career and overwhelmingly found it to be one where his social reform record during peacetime equalled his achievements as wartime PM.

### **MACDONALD, RAMSAY (1866–1937)**

After several failed attempts to be elected as a Labour candidate he realised the necessity for a joint Labour and Liberal majority in Parliament if the Conservatives were to be defeated. After Baldwin's electoral defeat in November 1923, MacDonald became Britain's first Labour PM but had to rely on Liberal support to overrule the defeated but outright majority of the Conservatives. His first term as PM was short lived, as in the general election of October 1924 the Conservatives, under Baldwin, were returned to Parliament with an overwhelming majority. MacDonald became PM for a second time after the general election of June 1929 but MacDonald, who only achieved a small majority of the votes, was once again forced to rely upon the Liberals to defeat the Conservatives. MacDonald, and his government, had to ride the storm produced by the Great Depression of 1929 but they collapsed under the strain. MacDonald formed a Coalition government in August 1931 and made massive cuts in public expenditure. His final term as PM ended in June 1935 when he was forced to step down due to ill health. He was replaced by Baldwin who became PM of a National Government.

**MOUNTBATTEN, LOUIS FRANCIS ALBERT VICTOR NICHOLAS, FIRST EARL  
MOUNTBATTEN OF BURMA (1900–1979)**

Home schooled and then Royal Naval College. Joined Navy in 1916. Naval officer (known as ‘Dickie’ affectionately; sometimes as ‘Mount-bottom’) who was accident prone and quite hapless. 1934 give command of HMS Daring. 1941 given command of HMS Kelly (sunk by German dive bombers – half the crew lost). 1942 Chief of Combined Operations (more to impress American allies than anything). Oversaw the (disastrous) Dieppe Raid of August 1942. 1943 appointed as Supreme Allied Commander which he held until 1946. He received the Japanese surrender at Singapore in September 1945. March 1947, appointed Viceroy of India who hastened British withdrawal from India. 1947–48 remained in India as Interim Governor. 1953 went back to the Navy and 1954 appointed First Sea Lord. 1959, appointed Chief of the Defence Staff, retired in 1965. Murdered by IRA in 1970.

**NICOLSON, HAROLD GEORGE (1886–1968)**

Diplomat and prodigious diarist. Wellington College and Balliol College, Oxford. Chief architect (alongside Leo Amery and Sir Mark Sykes) of the Balfour Declaration. Accompanied Smuts to Budapest in 1919. Various international postings but became disillusioned with diplomacy and finally elected as a National Labour candidate in 1935 for Leicester West. Joined Labour Party in 1947. Known for his tumultuous personal life and his always insightful yet sometimes scathing diaries.

**SALISBURY, ROBERT ARTHUR TALBOT GASCOYNE-CECIL, THIRD MARQUESS  
OF SALISBURY (1830–1903)**

Conservative MP for Stamford who, like Churchill, supplemented his income through journalism. Anti-radical who, in 1865 (when he became Viscount Cranborne after his brother died), became a fervent supporter of resisting the Franchise Bill. Secretary of State for India in 1866 (by the new PM Lord Derby). Resigned over the proposed Franchise Bill. Third Marquess of Salisbury and was, once again, appointed (this time by Disraeli) as Secretary of State for India

in 1874 during which time he was preoccupied with ‘the southward pressure of Russia on Persia and Afghanistan’. 1878, appointed as Foreign Secretary. Conservative Party Leader from 1880-84, Salisbury had to reach a compromise with Lord Randolph Churchill so as not to further alienate Conservative support. Salisbury became PM of a ‘caretaker’ government which lasted for seven months. His second time as PM lasted from 1886-1892 when the ‘most significant challenge’ to himself came in the form of the ambitious Lord Randolph Churchill. Finally, Salisbury was PM again from 1895–1902, a period which encompassed the Boer war and the raising of concern over imperial rule and safety. Heavily influenced Churchill on the notion of imperial security ‘begins at home’.

**SLIM, WILLIAM JOSEPH (1891–1970)**

Army officer. Grammar school education and Sandhurst. 1914 joined Royal Warwickshires; wounded at Gallipoli; and again in France and Mesopotamia. 1934–36, joined Indian Army Instructor Staff College, Camberley. Commanded the I Burma corps, XV Indian Corps, 14<sup>th</sup> Army and Allies Forces South East Asia. Not one of Churchill’s favourites. A soldier’s soldier. Highly respected. Confronted Churchill regarding the ‘forgotten armies’ being forgotten all over again in the memoirs.

**SMUTS, JAN CHRISTIAAN (1870–1950)**

South African politician, army officer, lawyer and twice PM of South Africa. Christ’s College, Cambridge. Back to South Africa, appointed Minister of Interior and member of Kruger's government. Fought against the British in the Boer War and also a lead negotiator in the Vereeniging Peace Treaty (1902). Defence minister as outbreak of First World War, rejoined army. 1917 joined Imperial War Cabinet in London. Proponent and advocate for a strong air force. PM of South Africa 1919–24; Deputy PM from 1933–39; and PM again from 1939-48. Close and loyal friend to Churchill.

**WINGATE, ORDE CHARLES (1903–1944)**

Army officer. Educated at Charterhouse School and then the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. 1923 commissioned into Royal Artillery. 1928 Sudan defence force. 1936 Intelligence post in Palestine. 1938 awarded DSO. Mental instability noticed by other (especially Wavell & Pownall). Known primarily as Churchill's favourite general and paraded in front of the Americans as such. Use and effectiveness of his Long Range Penetration Units subject of much discussion, praise and criticism. Killed in air crash 1944.

**WOOD, EDWARD FREDERICK LINDLEY, FIRST EARL OF HALIFAX (1851–1959)**

Eton, Christ Church, Oxford, followed by an All Souls fellowship. Conservative MP for Ripon, Yorkshire in 1910. Captain in the Queen's Own Yorkshire Dragoons and sent to the front line in France by 1916. Accepted the post Deputy Director of the Labour supply department at the Ministry of National Service from 1917–18. Appointed Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies in April 1921 and worked under Churchill who was the then Secretary of State. Board of Education and then Ministry of Agriculture.