

Winston Churchill and the British Public: Propaganda and Perception, 1939-1945

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Abstract

Winston Churchill is viewed in the popular memory of the Second World War as the epitome of British tenacity and bullishness, of courage and determination, and, as A.J.P. Taylor wrote in his famous footnote, the saviour of the nation. Through his speeches, Churchill provided the memorable rhetoric of the war and is seen to have unified the country both by his determined effort to win the war as well as by the adoration he inspired among the British public.

This thesis challenges these assumptions about Churchill's personal popularity during the war, and traces the fluctuations in the public's opinion of him. Rather than the apogee occurring in 1940 as the popular view would hold, the thesis argues that it came in 1943 when military victories, optimism for the post-war world and the emergent Churchill Legend converged. This provided an unrivalled platform for his reputation, but thereafter it began to fail as frustration and disappointment set in, so that by the General Election of 1945 Churchill's stock amongst the British public was exhausted; any vestigial popularity was based upon retrospective gratitude for his leadership in 1940 and his growing Legend.

In tracing the changing fortunes of Churchill's popularity, the thesis also explores which aspects of Churchill's public image appealed to the British people and which antagonised. It examines how Churchill's image was portrayed and to what extent it was manipulated by the media, the Ministry of Information and by Churchill himself. It is argued that the common aims of wartime propaganda facilitated the emergence of the Churchill Legend and that there was a discreet yet determined effort to popularise him, especially in the early days of the war.

Extensive use is made of the Home Intelligence Reports of the Ministry of Information and of Mass-Observation's File Reports to identify the public's opinions, whilst Churchill's papers and other sources reveal the programme of deliberate publicity that surrounded him during the war.

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Abbreviations

ANC	Anti-Nazi Council
BBK	Lord Beaverbrook's Papers, House of Lords
BIPO	British Institute of Public Opinion
CAB	Cabinet Files, Public Record Office, Kew
CHAR	Chartwell Papers, Churchill College, Cambridge
CHUR	Churchill Papers, Churchill College, Cambridge
CPA	Conservative Party Archives, Balliol College, Oxford
DAV	Lord Davidson's Papers, House of Lords
FR	File Report by Mass-Observation, Harvester Microfiche
HI	Home Intelligence Division of the Ministry of Information
HO	Home Office Files, Public Record Office, Kew
INF	Ministry of Information Files, Public Record Office, Kew
MO	Mass-Observation
MoI	Ministry of Information
MT	Monckton Trustees, Papers of Sir Walter Monckton, Balliol College, Oxford
PREM	Premier Files, Public Record Office, Kew
PRO	Public Record Office, Kew
RAB	R.A. Butler's Papers, Balliol College, Oxford
RCONT	Sir Winston Churchill, Talks File 1926-1939 at BBC Written Archives Centre
RG	Registry Files, Public Record Office, Kew
RIO	Regional Information Officer
WAC	BBC Written Archives Centre, Reading
WSS	Wartime Social Survey

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Introduction

“Had this war not come...who would speak of Winston Churchill?”

Adolf Hitler spoke these words in a broadcast in 1942 and with them summarised Winston Churchill's changing fortunes.¹ Hinting at Churchill's meteoric rise to fame and notoriety, Hitler was not simply caustically disparaging his enemy; there was also an element of truth in what he said. Until war became virtually inevitable in mid-1939, Churchill was widely supposed to have reached the end of his career, his star, having shone brightly, had burnt out in the 1930s when he advocated a number of policies that merely proved his recklessness and bad judgement to those who had come to expect nothing less of him.² He was kept from office and indeed kept from the airwaves until the war made new demands on the qualities required of leadership.³ Churchill possessed many, if not all, of the prerequisite virtues of such leadership and therewith began what he described as his “walk with destiny”.⁴ He later wrote of how, upon his accession to the premiership, he felt that “all [his] previous life had been but a preparation for this hour and for this trial”.⁵ Indeed, it was to prove his ‘finest hour’, a phrase he coined to describe Britain's momentous role in world affairs in 1940.⁶ Churchill went on to provide stirring rhetoric in the other speeches of that summer which have since come to define the national character at that critical moment in the nation's history. Thus Britons are remembered to have subscribed to Churchill's pledge to “fight on the beaches...in the streets...and in the hills” and “whatever the cost and agony may be”, vowed that they would “never surrender”.⁷ But in addition to providing the war with its memorable rhetoric, Churchill himself is said to have embodied British stoicism and determination,

¹ Hitler's broadcast, 30th January 1942, quoted in Philip Paneth, *The Prime Minister*, (Alliance Press, 1943) p. 62.

² Churchill held offices as: 1908 President of the Board of Trade, 1910-11 Home Secretary, 1911-1915 First Lord of the Admiralty, 1915 Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1917-1919 Minister of Munitions, 1919-1921 Secretary of State for War and Air, 1921-1922 Secretary of State for Colonies, 1924-1929 Chancellor of the Exchequer. See Chapter 1 for more on Churchill's early career and changing party affiliation.

³ See D.J. Wenden, “Churchill, Radio, and Cinema” in Blake and Louis, *Churchill*, (Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 215–240 for more on Churchill and broadcasting in the 1930s. For a study of leadership see Andrew Roberts, *Hitler and Churchill*, (Wiedenfield and Nicholson, 2003).

⁴ Winston Churchill, *The Second World War, Vol. 1 The Gathering Storm*, (Cassell, 1949), p. 601.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 601.

⁶ “Their Finest Hour”, House of Commons and broadcast, 18th June 1940, Winston Churchill, (edited by Randolph Churchill), *Into Battle*, (Cassell, 1941) pp. 225-243.

⁷ “Dunkirk”, House of Commons, 4th June 1940, “Blood, tears, toil and sweat”, House of Commons, 13th May 1940, Churchill, *Into Battle*, pp. 215-223 and pp. 207-8.

both in his temperament and in his bulldog features, often captured in photographs and emphasised in cartoons and caricature. He is depicted in countless photographic records of the war amidst the ruins of the Blitzed cities or brandishing his characteristic V-sign salute surrounded by vast and cheering crowds, making him virtually synonymous with the Second World War.⁸ As was written shortly after the war, “it is a great tribute to Democracy that when war came Mr. Churchill was unanimously accepted as leader of the nation...Politicians and public alike recognised that by temperament, application and genius he was the one man superbly fitted to command the battle. Never in history have the people of Britain been so solidly behind a Prime Minister”.⁹

This ‘memory’ of Churchill’s massive popularity when juxtaposed with Hitler’s reminder that Churchill only a few short months before had seemed to be in the twilight of his career raises questions of congruity: did Churchill really achieve such widespread popularity so instantly? If he did, how did this occur? Did it ever fade? These questions form the foci of this thesis. The primary focus concerns Churchill’s popularity with the British public during the war. It seems incredible that someone with as little political stock as Churchill in the late 1930s could have risen so rapidly to such a position of deification amongst the public, for people’s reactions, Mass-Observation found, were notoriously “slow and sluggish”¹⁰ and this was the subtext of Hitler’s comment in 1942. Equally, the thesis aims to show how public opinion developed through the course of the war, which factors influenced it and how it was reinforced through the media, social interaction and the developing Myth of the British at war.¹¹ In this way, it examines the different factors of Churchill’s public image, which appealed to the public and which inflamed opinion. On a more methodological note, it exposes the distinction between public, press and parliamentary opinions and reveals ways in which the blurring of these can distort historical understanding. Overall, the thesis seeks to challenge popular memory and, in contrast to other works on Winston Churchill, attempts to reconstruct a view of his Legend as perceived by the British public during the war.

⁸ For example, Martin Gilbert, *Imperial War Museum: Churchill at War*, (Carlton Books, 2003).

⁹ Virginia Cowles, *Winston Churchill*, (Hamish Hamilton, 1953), p. 11.

¹⁰ Mass-Observation File Report 1166, *Sir Stafford Cripps*, 23rd March 1942.

¹¹ That is, how the British public is remembered to have responded with unfailing positivity to the conditions brought about by the war and especially the Blitz. This has now been widely shown to have been somewhat embellished hence the use of Angus Calder’s term ‘Myth’. See the introduction to Chapter 2 for a historiographical survey of the Myth.

Historiography

In the course of the last century, Winston Churchill has attracted an enormous press, both popular and academic. His varied skills and interests have encouraged books to be written about him as a writer, orator, journalist, historian, artist, politician and bricklayer, not to mention countless picture books, memoirs and biographies. His official biography, initially undertaken by his son Randolph and taken over by Martin Gilbert, is credited as the longest ever written, stretching to eight volumes and fourteen companion volumes.¹² It is impossible to survey the entirety of Churchill literature, indeed one estimate places the number of individual pieces of work in English at over 5,000, undeniably augmented by America's love affair with him, and yet there is still a healthy market for new work. In 2003 alone there have been 15 books published in Britain which have focused directly on Churchill,¹³ but increasingly in the academic arena at least, they have undergone a certain transformation in the last fifteen years.

The 1940s and 1950s saw a generation of writers who were dazzled by the aura that surrounded the "greatest living Englishman".¹⁴ Lewis Broad claimed to have set out with the intention of "exposing a demagogue" but found instead that the facts compelled him to write "on a note of admiration", "a critic converted from his criticism".¹⁵ Other contemporaries of Broad acknowledged Churchill's shortcomings, notably his irascibility and tendency to irritate his opponents, but stressed that even his critics were obliged to admit his strengths. Bonar Law, for example, was quoted as begrudgingly admitting, "In mental powers and vital force, he is one of the utmost men in the country".¹⁶ A revisionist attitude to Churchill began to emerge following the publication of Robert Rhodes James's *Churchill: A Study in Failure*.¹⁷ This catalogued Churchill's career until his return to the Admiralty in 1939, concluding that it was not perhaps quite so illustrious as the post-war Legend had made it. Paul Addison was similarly critical, although a little

¹² Randolph Churchill and Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, (Heinemann, 1966-1988).

¹³ Some of these are for a populist audience and one (Michael Dobbs, *Winston's War*, (Harper Collins, 2003)) turns Churchill's life in the 1930s until his rise to the premiership into a novel. Works worthy of note include James W. Muller (ed.), *Churchill as Peacemaker* (Cambridge University Press, 2003) for a series of articles on Churchill's role as a peacemaker. For a more populist and typically hagiographical account see Dominique Enright, *Churchill, The Greatest Briton*, (Michael O'Mara Books, 2003).

¹⁴ See John Ramsden, "How Winston Churchill Became 'The Greatest Living Englishman'" in *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 1998, pp. 1-40.

¹⁵ Lewis Broad, *Winston Churchill, 1874-1945*, (Hutchinson, 1945). Interestingly the original 1941 edition did not carry the reference to the demagogue.

¹⁶ Bonar Law quoted in Malcolm Thomson, *The Life and Times of Winston Churchill*, (Odhams Press, 1945) p 13.

¹⁷ Robert Rhodes James, *Churchill: A Study in Failure*, (Wiedenfield and Nicolson, 1970).

more favourable, in his approach to Churchill's influence on domestic policy, nevertheless as he wrote he found that "the pendulum was swinging in [Churchill's] favour".¹⁸ In spite of Addison's obvious admiration, his is no unreserved hero worship redolent of a previous era, for his is a balanced account wherein he is able to admit, for example, that "Churchill was never the strategic genius of the Second World War" but that he was "a great political leader".¹⁹ This objective view of Churchill as a flawed genius is shared by many other writers who paint a fair portrait of the great man, warts and all. However, to deflect any accusations that they seek to undermine Churchill by being rigorous in their assessments of him several authors have added caveats to the effect, "a sober examination of Churchill's performance as a war leader in 1940 does not belittle his greatness. On the contrary, it makes him a more human and thereby impressive figure".²⁰ However, there have been a few authors in the late 1980s and 1990s who sought deliberately to paint a picture of only the warts. The most rancorous was David Irving's *Churchill's War*.²¹ This cast Churchill as an impecunious alcoholic who was controlled by Jewish interests and a later volume on the same theme explained that he was of "partly Jewish blood, although safely diluted".²² Less absurd but equally iconoclastic was Clive Ponting's *Churchill* which suggested that the Legend arose simply as a result of his own historical writings rather than any particular talent on Churchill's part.²³ Taking an even less melodramatic line, Andrew Roberts also tends to spotlight a few shortcomings in his comparison of Hitler and Churchill.²⁴ Although generally keen to show Churchill's greatness and volubly dismissing the extreme revisionists, Roberts seems to relish those instances where Churchill's less benevolent side appeared such as his keenness to dismiss those who failed him.²⁵ Criticism on a less personal level appears in John Charmley's *Churchill: The End of Glory* which holds Churchill responsible for the end of Empire. Churchill ought, Charmley argues, to have negotiated peace in 1940 to protect British interests, an argument shared by Ponting in an earlier volume on the

¹⁸ Paul Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front*, (Pimlico, 1993).

¹⁹ Ibid. p. viii.

²⁰ David Reynolds, "Churchill in 1940: The Worst and Finest Hour" p. 241 in Robert Blake and William Roger Louis, (eds.) *Churchill*, (Oxford University Press, 1993) pp. 241-256. See also Robert Rhodes James, "Churchill the Parliamentarian, Orator and Statesman" in the same volume, pp. 503-518.

²¹ David Irving, *Churchill's War: The Struggle for Power*, (Veritas, 1987).

²² David Irving, *Churchill's War: Triumph in Adversity*, (Focal Point, 2001) p. xii.

²³ Clive Ponting, *Churchill*, (Sinclair-Stevenson, 1994).

²⁴ Roberts, *Hitler and Churchill*.

²⁵ One such casualty was Duff Cooper who, Roberts claims, was dismissed by Churchill as Minister for Information in July 1941. However, Cooper willingly resigned primarily over difficulties with Dalton regarding propaganda to overseas. See John Charmley, *Duff Cooper: The Official Biography*, (Wiedenfield and Nicholson, 1986) and Duff Cooper, *Old Men Forget*, (Hart Davis, 1953).

Second World War.²⁶ Bringing the debate back to the middle ground is Roy Jenkins' biography which is the latest in a series of Rhadamanthine yet anodyne biographies, following in the shadow of Henry Pelling and Norman Rose.²⁷ Whilst the perceptions of Churchill differ in these works, what unites virtually all of them (with the exception of the most extreme revisionists) is their interpretation of Churchill's massive popularity.

The notion of a worshipful public, of course, fits snugly with the Great Man Legend and was understandably never questioned in the 1940s and 1950s, but even the more critical writers in subsequent decades have never seriously questioned his popularity, or more commonly, never allowed it to impinge on the argument about the great man's strengths and failings. In a subsidiary point, Charmley, for example, writes of how Churchill manages to silence the appeasers following the collapse of France in 1940 by using his skills as an orator "to appeal over their heads to the British people".²⁸ This implies an unquestioning acceptance on the part of the British public and an instantaneous recognition of the greatness of his speeches. Angus Calder confirms Churchill's popularity, writing that opinion poll results concerning approval of him were "never less than seventy eight per cent."²⁹ Similarly, Paul Addison makes a brief reference to Churchill's growing popularity during his tenure at the Admiralty which he tentatively - and rightly so - suggests may have strengthened Churchill's hand in his claim for the premiership, but again this is not the focus of the book.³⁰ There are, however, two notable detractors from this notion of Churchill's outright popularity during the war. Clive Ponting argues that Churchill was not so terribly popular during his time at the Admiralty whilst John Ramsden claims that the Churchill Legend was purely a post-war phenomenon arising from a variety of deficiencies in national identity, such as the disappointments evolving from the loss of Empire, and the assertions of Britain's moral authority in continuing the fight against the Nazis in 1940.³¹ This is also the focus of his thoroughly researched tome on Churchill's reputation, the only book to address the issue

²⁶ John Charmley, *Churchill: The End of Glory*, (Hodder and Staughton, 1993). Hereafter *End of Glory*. Clive Ponting, *1940: Myth and Reality*, (Hamish Hamilton, 1990). For a further discussion of the revisionists see Paul Addison, "Churchill and the Price of Victory" in Nick Tiratsoo (ed.) *From Blitz to Blair*, (Wiedenfield and Nicholson, 1997) pp. 53-76.

²⁷ Roy Jenkins, *Churchill*, (Macmillan, 2001). Henry Pelling, *Winston Churchill*, (Macmillan, 1974). Norman Rose, *Churchill: An Unruly Life* (Simon and Schuster, 1995).

²⁸ Charmley, *End of Glory*, p. 398. See also George Cassar, "Political Leaders in Wartime: Lloyd George and Churchill" in Bourne et al, *The Great World War, 1914-1945*, Vol. 1. p. 387.

²⁹ Angus Calder, *The People's War*, (Pimlico, 1999 edition of original published by Jonathan Cape, 1969) p. 97.

³⁰ Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front*, p. 326.

³¹ Ponting, *Churchill*, pp. 428-9. John Ramsden, "How Winston Churchill Became 'The Greatest Living Englishman'".

with regard to any period.³² But the discrepancy of quite when the Churchill Legend arose has failed to stimulate any debate.

If little but peripheral attention has been paid to the public's attitude to Churchill, then it follows that there is no examination of why he was popular (or not) or how indeed the Legend arose. John Charmley promised much when he noted, "To write of 1940 and Churchill meant going back to explain how the man of 1940 had been created".³³ However, he stays firmly within the parameters of the 'top down' approach, looking at Churchill from the perspective of his influence on policies and strategies and his relationship with other members of the political élite; he does not examine how the *image* of the man of 1940 had been created or indeed what it was. The resistance to pursue this particular impression can be explained by the entrenched view that Churchill was the master of his own publicity.³⁴ He would, for example, pause before entering a room to light a cigar so that he might be seen with his trademark symbol,³⁵ and he undeniably relished playing to the cameras. Similarly, he was said to withhold good news so that he might announce it himself and receive the full glory usually bestowed upon the messenger of favourable tidings.³⁶ But instances such as these are insufficient to explain quite how Churchill rose to such eminence and indeed why the BBC audience jumped from around 9 per cent for the previous and subsequent programmes to 71 per cent when Churchill spoke on VE day or indeed why people were prepared to wait hours to hear him speak on the balcony of the Ministry of Health, cheering him to the echo when he did finally appear.³⁷ That they were there at all proves that the Legend had been created to some extent by 1945, even if it remained to be fully cemented in the ensuing decades.

This thesis aims to address this gap in the vast quantity of Churchill literature by concentrating on how Churchill was viewed by the very people who afforded him his legendary status: the British public. This encompasses what people's opinions were of him and how the Legend began to emerge in the popular culture of the time. In doing so, it does not seek to revise the extant works on Churchill or indeed reinterpret the

³² John Ramsden, *Man of the Century*. Although Brian Gardiner's *Churchill in His Time: A Study in His Reputation 1939-1945* (Methuen, 1968) promises much, it is more of a survey of published opinion.

³³ Charmley, *End of Glory*, p. 2.

³⁴ Ramsden, "How Winston Churchill Became 'The Greatest Living Englishman'".

³⁵ Letter by Strube in *Illustrated*, 11th December 1954.

³⁶ Admiral Godfrey cited in Paul Addison, *The Road to 1945*, (Cape, 1975) p. 79.

³⁷ BBC Audience Listener Barometer Report, R9/11/12, BBC Written Archives Centre (hereafter WAC). The figure may also have been heightened since the figures for Churchill's speech also included the news. Mass-Observation File Report 2263, *Victory in Europe*, June 1945.

Churchill Legend. Instead, it aims to add an extra dimension to Churchill studies which has been hitherto impeded in the push to assess the claims of Churchill's greatness or else have been overshadowed by the Legend itself. The thesis also makes a methodological case about the necessity of studying public opinion in an historical context and counsels against complacency about public opinion and the blurring of different types of opinion, namely press, parliamentary and public.

The case for greater attention to be paid to public opinion was made over twenty years ago by D.G. Boyce.³⁸ He argued that the historian ought to adopt some of the lines of enquiry more usual to the field of the social scientist, although did recognise that the historian may be deterred by the vagaries of social science. In attempting to define public opinion, for instance, he noted that the historian might "become bogged down in a strange and unfamiliar world of refining concepts perhaps even linguistic analysis".³⁹ Indeed, this can and does happen. John Fair's article, for example, in which he attempts to explain Churchill's rise to the premiership using Jones and Nesbitt's theory of social action does leave the reader rather bewildered when half way through the article the theory is dismissed as nonsense.⁴⁰ Similarly, Dennis Kavanagh's application of Weber's carefully defined notion of charismatic leadership to Churchill during the war years leaves the historian rather cold.⁴¹ It seems not to further any understanding of Churchill or his times and fails to take account of any historical context. But this should not deter the historian from pursuing a study of public opinion.

The Second World War is blessed with a wealth of information on public opinion which scholars have only recently begun to use in detail. Although a number of works have been published by and about Mass-Observation,⁴² the material collected by the organisation has yet to have a major impact on researchers in that MO findings have rarely dictated the argument; rather MO has been used in a secondary role to support a predetermined agenda.⁴³ The files of the Ministry of Information's Home Intelligence Division have similarly been neglected in providing in-depth studies of the public. Ian

³⁸ D.G. Boyce, "Public Opinion and the Historian" in *History*, Vol. 63, 1978, pp. 214-228.

³⁹ Ibid. p. 214.

⁴⁰ John Fair, "The Norway Debate and Winston Churchill's Rise to Power in 1940: A Study of Perception and Attribution" in *International History Review*, Vol. IX, No. 3, August 1987, pp. 410-437.

⁴¹ Dennis Kavanagh, *Crisis, Charisma and British Political Leadership: Winston Churchill as the Outsider*, (Sage Publications, 1974).

⁴² For example, *Britain* by Mass-Observation, (Penguin, 1939), Tom Harrisson, *Living Through the Blitz*, (Collins, 1976), Jeffrey Richards and Dorothy Sheridan, (eds.) *Mass-Observation at the Movies*, (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), Angus Calder and Dorothy Sheridan, *Speak for Yourself*, (Jonathan Cape, 1984).

⁴³ For example, Paul Addison, *Road to 1945*, Malcolm Smith, *Britain and 1940* (Routledge, 2000).

McLaine's *Ministry of Morale* does make extensive use of the files, but it is foremostly a work of administrative history, not of public opinion.⁴⁴ One early example which stands out for its time is P.M.H. Bell's *John Bull and the Bear*.⁴⁵ This short book is an exemplary study of popular attitudes to Russia during the war. Bell's sensitivity to the vagaries of public opinion was rare for its time and indeed still is. The tide is, however, beginning to turn and Robert Mackay's recent book, *Half the Battle*, takes up where McLaine left off and use of the files is beginning to feature more prominently in other works, such as Sonya O. Rose's *Which People's War?* and Ross McKibbin's *Classes and Cultures*.⁴⁶

This thesis, therefore, seeks to contribute to a burgeoning body of work which examines popular attitudes and perceptions whilst also complementing studies of Winston Churchill.

Sources and Methodology

As indicated above, the Second World War is richly studded with sources on public opinion. Although the assessment of public opinion was still in its infancy at the outbreak of war, the reports produced by the Home Intelligence Division (HI) of the Ministry of Information and Mass-Observation (MO) provide a valuable and unparalleled insight into the attitudes of the British public during the war. These are complemented by the opinion polls of the British Institute of Public Opinion (BIPO) and together they form the basis of the primary aim of this thesis, that is, to discover people's attitudes to Churchill. The secondary aim, to reveal how the Churchill Legend developed, required the use of a more extensive set of sources, notably newsreels and newspapers together with other published sources such as books and pamphlets. Material culture and how Churchill's image was reproduced in effigy is also examined. But to understand how these images came to be included in the media meant a search through the administrative files of the Ministry of Information (MoI), the personal

⁴⁴ Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale* (George Allen and Unwin, 1979).

⁴⁵ P.M.H. Bell, *John Bull and the Bear, British Public Opinion, Foreign Policy and the Soviet Union 1941-1945*, (Edward Arnold, 1990).

⁴⁶ Robert Mackay, *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain During World War Two*, (Manchester University Press, 2002). Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War?* (Manchester University Press, 2003). Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, (Oxford University Press, 1998).

papers of members of the MoI and Churchill's papers from the war period. The search was, however, frustrated by the incompleteness of the record.

The MoI was the *enfant terrible* of Government departments during the war. Set up partially under duress and fully under suspicion,⁴⁷ the MoI never found full acceptance from the press or parliament.⁴⁸ As a result, many of its files were lost in its transference to the Central Office of Information in 1946 and it was never accorded an official history which may have preserved a more complete record of its wartime activities.⁴⁹ The minutes of the Home Publicity Planning Committee held at the Public Record Office, for example, have proved invaluable in determining MoI propaganda policy but they appear to have been the personal collection of Michael Balfour who worked on the committee for part of the war; whenever he was absent and after he had left the department in 1942, a note within the file helpfully explains, the record ends.⁵⁰ To try to complete the record, the personal papers of other members of the committee and indeed the General Planning Committee, Home Publicity Committee and General Production Committee were traced. For this, the files held by the Monckton Trustees at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, proved a rich source of minutes for the Executive Board, but again these are incomplete and offer tantalising glimpses of what other records might contain. The same is true of Lord Davidson's papers held at the House of Lords archive. The papers of other senior members of the MoI have proved untraceable or unproductive.

In an attempt to complement the missing information I consulted the papers of Lord Beaverbrook at the House of Lords archive and of Churchill at Churchill College, Cambridge. The latter proved particularly useful. Although the Churchill archive runs to some 3,000 boxes, it seems the record is incomplete. There is evidence to suggest, for example, that the MoI manipulated photographs for some of the volumes of Churchill's

⁴⁷ Mariel Grant explores the development of attitudes towards propaganda and Government publicity in the interwar period in *Propaganda and the Role of the State in Inter-war Britain*, (Oxford University Press, 1994). Temple Willcox examines the plans for the MoI made before the war in "Towards a Ministry of Information" in *History* Vol. 69, No. 227, 1984, pp. 398-414. For more on the methodological difficulties encountered during the setting up of the Ministry see Temple Willcox, "Projection or Publicity? Rival Concepts in the Pre-War Planning of the British Ministry of Information" in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 18, 1983, pp. 97-116.

⁴⁸ The most comprehensive survey of the difficulties faced by the MoI is in McLaine, *Ministry of Morale*. See also Duff Cooper's memoirs, *Old Men Forget*.

⁴⁹ For more on the Central Office of Information see Fife Clark, *The Central Office of Information*, (George Allen and Unwin, 1970) and Marjory Ogilvy-Webb, *The Government Explains*, (George Allen and Unwin, 1965).

⁵⁰ Minutes of the Planning Committee, Ministry of Information files, INF1/251 at the Public Record Office, Kew.

speeches but this can only be proven in one case.⁵¹ Similarly, the letters from the public are all of a favourable tone and only one contains anything which is tantamount to criticism although this is corrected in a postscripted caveat.⁵² This suggests one of two things: either Churchill's critics stayed their pens and did not write to complain, or else the critical letters were weeded out upon their receipt so that an impression be created of full acceptance of Churchill on the part of the public. Nevertheless, the Churchill archive proved an invaluable source as well as providing a fascinating insight into Churchill's character. As John Ramsden said, working on Churchill's documents is a great pleasure and a great honour; his personality simply pours off the page.⁵³

One very large gap in the documentary record is what might have been provided by Brendan Bracken, Churchill's friend, confidant and Parliamentary Secretary from the outbreak of war until July 1941 when he became Minister of Information until the end of the war. At once shy yet garrulous, Bracken's secretiveness led him to destroy his private papers throughout his life; the rest were burned at his request by his chauffeur upon his death in 1958. Even Churchill commented what a disservice this was to history.⁵⁴ The gaps, whilst frustrating, are not completely insurmountable for there is some documentary evidence of his role in British politics remaining in the archives of others with whom he worked. This alone reveals his centrality to the manipulation of Churchill's public image.

The patchiness of the documentary record regarding the control of publicity of Churchill is not matched by that pertaining to public opinion. This is, by contrast, fecund thanks to the endeavours of MO and the HI Division and each had its own merits.⁵⁵ The topics studied by MO tended to be eclectic but in greater depth than the HI reports. This is particularly useful where MO conducted a study which is of direct interest to the historian; inconvenient when not. HI, however, simply reported what was concerning the public, initially on a daily basis and then, as the threat of invasion passed and the MoI began to realise it need not worry so much about public morale, the reports appeared on a weekly basis until December 1944. This perhaps shows a more realistic

⁵¹ See the section on the Ministry of Information in Chapter 3.

⁵² Vivien Jameson to Churchill, 25th June 1942, CHAR2/448.

⁵³ John Ramsden, seminar paper given at the University of Kent.

⁵⁴ See the two biographies of Bracken, Charles Lysaght, *Brendan Bracken*, (Allen Lane, 1979) and Andrew Boyle, *Poor, Dear Brendan*, (Hutchinson, 1974).

⁵⁵ The completed Mass-Observation reports are available on microfiche (*Mass-Observation File Reports 1937 - 1949*, Harvester Microfiche, 1984) and at the MO Archive, University of Sussex, which also holds the original data in its Topic Collection classification whilst the HI reports are available at the Public Record Office, Kew in INF1/264 (daily reports) and INF1/292 (weekly reports).

assessment of public opinion as it was purely observational: it did not have the potential to induce opinions where none existed as might be the case with the question-answer method used by BIPO and, on occasion, MO. Equally, HI was able to assess opinion throughout the country which MO, with its limited resources, was never able to do.

The HI reports were dependent on information collected from its network of Regional Information Officers (RIOs) who in turn gathered their information from a variety of trustworthy individuals, such as journalists, managers of WH Smiths, and workers in Citizens' Advice Bureaux who had daily contact with large numbers of people.⁵⁶ The RIOs' reports were then passed on to the London office and synthesised, together with other sources, to produce HI's reports. The supplementary material was provided by the statistical surveys of the Wartime Social Survey (WSS)⁵⁷ and BIPO, the BBC Listener Survey,⁵⁸ Party Political organisations, voluntary bodies such as the Women's Institute and the Women's Voluntary Service, and secret sources from police reports⁵⁹ and postal censorship. The latter examined up to 200,000 letters a month, far more than BIPO or WSS could ever hope to interview. The HI reports have been criticised for their being open to the bias of the author but, since so many people were involved in the production of the report, this effect was diminished. As a result of this rigorousness, the HI reports enabled a more thorough understanding of the British public than had been possible at the start of the war.

MO employed similar qualitative methods although on a much smaller scale. It had been set up in 1937 by Tom Harrisson and Charles Madge with the intention of providing "an anthropology of ourselves".⁶⁰ Its techniques varied from HI by relying on a volunteer panel to discover private opinions. Members of the panel would submit

⁵⁶ Listed in a memorandum by Mary Adams, 16th July 1940, INF1/251.

⁵⁷ The WSS was one branch of the HI division which was regulated independently by the London School of Economics. But rather than being concerned with public opinion on a variety of topics, it chose specific areas to study. Its 50 trained staff interviewed some 3,000 people for each enquiry concerning behavioural or material factors. The results were expressed statistically in much the same way that BIPO's were. Its findings have not been studied here, with one exception, as they do not relate to opinion of Churchill. See Kathleen Box and Geoffrey Thomas "The Wartime Social Survey" in *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol. 107, 1944, pp. 151-177 for a fuller account of its duties.

⁵⁸ For the BBC's methods of assessment see Robert Silvey, "Methods of Listener Research Employed by the British Broadcasting Corporation" in *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Series B, Parts III and IV, 1944, pp. 190-220. For a more general approach see Robert Silvey, *Who's Listening?* (Allen and Unwin, 1974). The BBC Listener Surveys can be viewed at the BBC Written Archives Centre, Reading. However, apart from the barometer reports which gave an indication of the size of the audience and one report on Churchill's speech of 8th December 1941 they held little of direct relevance.

⁵⁹ Despite an extensive search, only one example of these has been found. Police Duty Room Fortnightly Summaries of Reports Received from Chief Officers of Police, HO199/505.

⁶⁰ For a history of MO see *Britain by Mass-Observation*.

diaries or records of overheard conversations, for example, or write in in response to questions set as 'directives'.⁶¹ These would be supplemented, paradoxically, by questionnaires conducted by the handful of full-time MO staff. This information would then be collated into file reports or used for publication. As with HI's reports, they tended to express the results qualitatively and often with verbatim accounts which are more widely available in the MO Archive's Topic Collection series. While these provide a fascinating insight into the minds of certain individuals, it is difficult to draw wider conclusions from them. For this reason MO's File Reports have been used more extensively than the Topic Collection papers, for although the reports (of both MO and HI) were open to bias, it is presumed that the authors, who were skilled in public opinion assessment, had a far greater understanding of the public's mores than an historian attempting to reconstruct public opinion from fragmentary sources some sixty years later. Whilst this latter course may be the only one open to historians of other periods, it seems churlish, even foolish, to dismiss the work of HI and MO simply on the grounds of intractability.

In addition to the qualitative expression of its findings, MO did on occasion employ the quantitative method. That is, indicating the prevalence of certain opinions in terms of percentages such as is common practice in today's opinion polls. The same technique was used by BIPO. The former method had the advantage over the latter in that shades of opinion and conflicting opinions could be more easily recorded. Thus a response to a question about Churchill's popularity might be "he's alright but he has a finger in every pie"⁶² which is difficult to quantify in BIPO's "Yes/No/Don't Know" categories. In spite of this shortcoming, the quantitative approach did enjoy the support of the scientific and academic communities, at least as practised by BIPO.⁶³

⁶¹ For more on the nature of the MO's panel see Nick Stanley, *The Extra Dimension: A Study in the Assessments and Methods of Mass-Observation in its First Period, 1937-1940*. PhD Thesis, Birmingham Polytechnic, 1981.

⁶² Mass-Observation File Report 1111, *Opinion on Cabinet Changes*, 24th February 1942.

⁶³ Much time has been devoted to critiques of the MO method. For the accuracy of the panel method see Stanley, *The Extra Dimension*, and Jennifer Platt "Anglo-American Contacts in the Development of Research Methods before 1945" in Martin Bulmer et al, *The Social Survey in Historical Perspective*, (Cambridge University Press, 1993) pp. 340-348. See also the introductory essay in the same volume. For a self-critical survey see Mass-Observation File Report 1957 *Mass-Observation Methods: A Perspective*, 20th February 1943. For a comparison of BIPO's and MO's methods see Henry Durant and Tom Harrison, "Quantitative and Qualitative Methods in Social Research" in *Nature*, Vol. 49, 9th May 1942, p. 156 and Mass-Observation File Report 1410, *The Limitations of Statistics in the Field of Public Opinion*, 9th September 1942.

BIPO was the British version of the American Gallup poll and was introduced to this country in 1937.⁶⁴ It quickly gained a reputation for accuracy after predicting Edith Summerskill's victory in the Fulham by-election in 1938. Its scientific respectability rested upon its statistical methodology. In order to allow rigorous statistical analysis, each questionnaire that BIPO conducted required a sample of some 2-2,500 people and it was careful to interview a cross-section of the public. Interviewers were instructed to ensure that one third of the sample was women of voting age and that the ratio 6:8:11 be kept for the age groups 21-29, 30-49 and 50+.⁶⁵ The different social classes were also to be represented proportionally,⁶⁶ something which both HI and MO failed to do.⁶⁷

For the historian, opinion polls do hold certain limitations. While they might have been more acceptable to the scientific community and provide a readily quotable summary of opinion, they can easily be misunderstood and misrepresentative. They also blur the distinction between public and private opinion. MO was particularly adamant in making this distinction, arguing that private opinion was what a man might say to himself or to his wife, whereas public opinion was what he might say to a friend, an acquaintance, or, significantly, a stranger. As Tom Harrisson defined, "Public opinion is only part of private opinion and only that part which, so to speak, dare show itself at any given moment".⁶⁸ The MoI borrowed much from this definition and the parallel in Stephen Taylor's definition is striking: "public opinion is the integrated result of private opinion".⁶⁹ In this way, opinion polls only give an indication of what were *acceptable* opinions. Henry Durant, the founder of BIPO, freely admitted that with the interview technique people tended to give answers which they felt they should give. Polls, for example, found more readers of *The Listener* than could possibly exist, while MO found

⁶⁴ For more on the circumstances surrounding BIPO's arrival in Britain from America see Robert M. Worcester, *British Public Opinion*, (Blackwell, 1981).

⁶⁵ The employment of Mass-Observation and the British Institute of Public Opinion, INF1/261.

⁶⁶ The classification system used by BIPO to indicate class was outlined in M. Abrams, *The Home Market*, (George Allen and Unwin, 1939), p.145. Here, 5.2% were denoted Class A, that is, people earning £10+ /week; Class B, 21.3% earning £4-10/week; Class C¹, 37.8 % earning £2 ¹⁰/week, and Class C² 35.7%, earning up to £2 ¹⁰/week. MO used the same classification only denoting C² as Class D. Thus, almost three-quarters of the population were considered to be 'working-class'.

⁶⁷ MO's samples rarely exceeded 80 or so individuals and as such could not be analysed statistically. In spite of this, they did show a surprising correlation with BIPO's results on the occasions both organisations investigated the same subject at the same time. Given this level of corroboration, MO's statistical results have been used here in the same way as BIPO's.

⁶⁸ Mass-Observation File Report 361, *What is Public Opinion?* August 1940.

⁶⁹ Stephen Taylor's report on public opinion, appendix to Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 22nd-29th September 1941, INF1/292.

more people claiming to carry gasmasks than actually did.⁷⁰ If polls could not be relied on to give an accurate account of what was essentially tangible behaviour, then they were unlikely to be able to quantify an opinion reliably, especially as it may not even be held very strongly. This is especially significant concerning Churchill's popularity for attitudes to him were also governed by patriotism, loyalty to the country as well as fear of appearing at variance with mass opinion.⁷¹

A further limitation of both methods of assessment is their tendency to blur distinctions of class and gender. HI did on occasion make the distinction between, for example, 'thinking' and 'unthinking' classes and where such differences were noted this has been indicated in the text, but BIPO's results were published without fail as averages of the entire population, and the results of relevant polls are given in Appendix 4.⁷² BIPO's publishing method tends to conceal many diverse groups within society. MO did break down some of the results of their polls which revealed considerable differences between classes and gender.⁷³ However, rather than making assumptions that were never made at the time in order to satisfy modern interests, especially with HI sources, public opinion is treated here as mass opinion; the diversity of Churchill's appeal makes this almost a prerequisite. While Churchill's politics might have alienated a socialist worker, for example, the same worker may have been overawed by his leadership or else appreciative of Churchill's commitment to send aid to Russia. Such an opinion could not be classed as wholly favourable or unfavourable. In view of this, it is worth bearing in mind the caveat that accompanied each of the HI reports, that "it is not meant to be a record of facts...It is a statement and reflection of the public's views and feelings about the war in general".⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Durant in Mass-Observation File Report 1133-34, *Bracken's Trackers*, March 1942 and gasmasks in Mass-Observation File Report 1626-7, *Methods of Mass-Observation with Particular Reference to Housing*, March 1943.

⁷¹ As is argued in Chapter Three, social consensus was a vital part of Churchill's popularity.

⁷² BIPO's results were published regularly in the *News Chronicle* and in the more specialist *Public Opinion Quarterly* and afterwards were compiled into various volumes, the most comprehensive being George Gallup, *Public Opinion Polls, Great Britain, 1937-1949* (Random House, 1976) and Hadley Cantril, *Public Opinion 1935-1946* (Princeton University Press, 1951). None of these break the figures down into social groups and unfortunately the Gallup archive is inaccessible (without substantial funds at least) to be able to investigate the differences further.

⁷³ For example, the question "What do think of the Common Wealth Party which has been fighting so many elections recently?" found 3% of men giving unfavourable answers but as many as 27% of women. The average of 15% therefore gives an unreliable figure. Mass-Observation File Report 1628, *Extract of News Quota Questionnaire*, February 1943.

⁷⁴ The disclaimer appeared on each of its daily reports and weekly reports 1940-1944, INF1/264 and INF1/292.

One distinction which is clearly drawn in the thesis is the difference between public, press and parliamentary opinions. All too often these are blurred.⁷⁵ Sources for press opinion are quite obvious, although greater emphasis was placed on the most popular national daily newspapers, particularly the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mirror* which had the second largest circulation in Britain. These were supplemented by systematic examination of the three other biggest selling newspapers: the *Daily Herald*, the *Daily Mail* and the *News Chronicle*.⁷⁶ The most popular Sunday newspaper, the *News of the World*, was also extensively consulted at the British Newspaper Library, Colindale, and Manchester public library. These newspapers were chosen as they were read by some nine million people on a daily basis, nearly a quarter of the adult population, if not more given that many newspapers were shared in the workplace.⁷⁷ This was especially characteristic of wartime conditions when newsprint rationing meant people had to pre-order their own copies. The use of these newspapers contrasts with the more usual choice in historical works of *The Times* or the *Manchester Guardian*, but because this thesis aims to examine popular attitudes rather than élite opinion, it was felt that the literature with which people came into daily contact was more apposite.

Also aiming at a mass audience were the newsreels. On the outbreak of war 20 million people went to the cinema on a weekly basis where they would see a 10 minute newsreel as part of the programme and by 1944 audience figures had risen to 24 million.⁷⁸ There were five newsreel companies in Britain at the time, *Universal* having the smallest circulation but which still had a larger audience than the biggest selling newspaper.⁷⁹ For the purposes of this thesis, the newsreels of *Pathé Gazette* were viewed on-line where stories contained references to Churchill or had relevance to significant events which had direct bearing on Churchill's relation with the public.⁸⁰ The indices of both the *Pathé* website and the British Universities Film and Video Council website

⁷⁵ For a particularly unfortunate example given the subject of the article, see Alan Foster, "Politicians, Public Opinion and the Press: The Storm of British Military Intervention in Greece in December 1944" in *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 19, No. 3, 1984, pp. 453-494.

⁷⁶ See Appendix 5 for more details of newspaper circulation figures. For a break down of newspaper readership see Appendix 4, Table 18.

⁷⁷ The *News of the World* was read by over a tenth of the population with around 4,500,000 readers.

⁷⁸ Nicholas Pronay "The News Media at War" p. 176 in Nicholas Pronay and D.R.W. Spring (eds) *Propaganda, Politics and Film, 1918-1945*, (Macmillan, 1982) pp. 173-208. For more on the nature of the audience see J.P. Meyer, *British Cinemas and Their Audiences*, (Dennis Dobson, 1948).

⁷⁹ The five newsreels companies were: *British Paramount*, *Gaumont British*, *British Movietone*, *Pathé Gazette* and *Universal*.

⁸⁰ www.britishpathe.com.

proved invaluable for this.⁸¹ The latter also provided online documentation of other newsreels, including transcripts of the commentaries.

Radio was also an important means of communication with nine million sets being licensed and which had an audience of 30 million.⁸² Given the value attached to Churchill's oratory, it was particularly pertinent to publicity surrounding Churchill. Although Churchill made many dedicated broadcasts throughout the war, these were complemented by broadcasts of recordings of speeches made at venues other than the House of Commons. In this way the public came to hear Churchill's voice rather more often than it is first supposed. Parliamentary procedure, however, proscribed the recording of any speeches given in the House and consequently the delivery of many speeches has been lost. It is on account of this that oral history has played no part in the research for this thesis. Early enquiries revealed many people who 'remembered' exactly what they were doing as they heard Churchill broadcast his famous lines, "We shall fight on the beaches" in June 1940.⁸³ However, the speech was never broadcast by Churchill during the war. In fact, it was only after the war that he made a recording. What people remembered was, perhaps, the common practice of an announcer reading out selected parts of a speech on to which they grafted Churchill's characteristic intonation, or else it was a fabricated memory, invented completely under the influence of the post-war Legend and post-war recordings. Such a misleading source has more to reveal about the subsequent Legend than it has about contemporary public opinion and therefore is not relevant to this study.

For the text of the speeches, the books published by Churchill during the war or else at his behest have been used.⁸⁴ Although there are countless collections of his speeches, it seems reasonable to use the same collection that would have been available to wartime audiences. This precludes the volume, therefore, of secret sessions speeches which was not published for obvious reasons until after the war. A list of Churchill's most important speeches is given in Appendix 1 together with an indication of the most

⁸¹ www.buafc.ac.uk.

⁸² The audience figures are based on the BBC's Listener Survey Barometer Report which calculated that 1 per cent was equivalent to 300,000 people. Siân Nicholas suggests a similar figure, writing that 90 per cent of households had a radio. *Echo of War*, (Manchester University Press, 1996) p. 71.

⁸³ See section on Churchill's speeches in Chapter 2: 1940.

⁸⁴ For his speeches from 1939 to November 1940, *Into Battle*, (1941); speeches from late 1940 to the end of 1941, *The Unrelenting Struggle*, (1942); and then annually, *The End of the Beginning*, (1943); *Onwards Towards Victory*, (1944); *The Dawn of Liberation*, (1945); *Victory*, (1946). All published by Cassell and all edited by Charles Eade except *Into Battle*, edited by Randolph Churchill.

famous phrases and the size of broadcast audiences, whilst the text of the most salient speeches is given in Appendix 2.

Parliamentary opinion is not a specific focus of this thesis although it is unavoidably encountered. Where this is so, it is usually clear from the source that it pertains to politicians and the élite rather than the general public. *The Times*, where it is referenced, is used in this manner, as is *Hansard*. The diaries and memoirs of politicians and other important public figures have also proved invaluable in recreating opinions of the time. Especially profitable were the diaries of John Colville, Sir Henry Channon and Harold Nicolson.⁸⁵ Again, their opinions are not taken as representative of public opinion except where they indicated in the text that this was so and it has been used accordingly.

Structure

The thesis is divided into two parts, the first of which examines Winston Churchill in relation to the Myth of the British at war and upon which grounds his reputation emerged, whilst the second traces his image in terms of his role as Prime Minister and the challenges made to his status. The undulation of Churchill's popularity with the British public is the over-arching theme and for this, the thesis is laid out on a broadly chronological basis. In this way, Chapter 1 provides a brief survey of Churchill's standing with the public before the war began in earnest with the invasion of France and the Low Countries in May 1940. It traces attitudes to appeasement in the 1930s and how this affected the public's perceptions of Churchill, especially once his warnings about Nazism had been vindicated. The chapter goes on to address his popularity during his incumbency as First Lord of the Admiralty and introduces issues that were at the forefront of the public's mind at the time in relation to the prosecution of the war and Churchill's suitability to the task.

The period for which Churchill is best remembered is examined in Chapter 2. 1940 is commonly regarded as Churchill's 'finest hour' and countless articles, books and chapters on that year have been thus titled. Its centrality to the Churchill Legend, and

⁸⁵ John Colville, *The Fringes of Power*, (Hodder and Staughton, 1985). Harold Nicolson, (edited by Nigel Nicholson) *Diaries and Letters 1939-1945*, (Collins, 1967). Henry Channon, (edited by Robert Rhodes James) *Chips: the Diaries of Sir Henry Channon*, (Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1967).

indeed the Myth of the war, warrants its inclusion as a separate chapter and it primarily explores the veracity of the claims that Churchill met with instant and unanimous approval among the public upon his accession to the premiership. It also examines what Churchill's image had become and why people responded to him in the way that they did. By expanding on themes introduced in Chapter 1, the contribution of the media to the development of the Churchill Legend is also studied.

The role of the media is taken up more fully in the next chapter which addresses the publicity surrounding Churchill in terms of the press, the MoI, and commercialism, and reveals how his image was carefully maintained and manipulated. It assesses the supposition that Churchill controlled his own publicity, which has hitherto hindered the study of Churchill's image, as well as questioning the democratic integrity of the Ministry of Information and its propaganda campaign. The chapter also examines the wider context of Churchill publicity and how it intersects with the Myth of the war.

The chronological theme of Churchill's popularity is taken up again in Chapter 4 which principally examines the years 1941 to 1943. It traces how Churchill was viewed as a military strategist and how, as a result, the ebb and flow of his reputation rested upon military victories and defeats. But the British war effort was also dependent upon her Allies and Churchill's visits to meet the Allied leaders are examined in the second part of the chapter. His status as an international statesman clearly solidified during the post-war period, but the public's perceptions of Churchill during the war were also affected by his diplomatic pursuits. This may not have carried as much weight as did other facets of his image, nevertheless, it is included here as it reveals much about Churchill's popularity.

The final chapter completes the chronological survey and concentrates upon the years 1943 to 1945 with reference to Churchill's role in domestic politics, parliamentary opinion of him and his involvement in planning for reconstruction. Although questions about what the post-war period might bring had already emerged by 1943, it was from this date that reconstruction began to occupy the public's thoughts, even to the point of obsession. A great part of Churchill's popularity therefore rested on his willingness to address this issue and, the chapter argues, the outcome of the General Election in 1945 was largely dependent on it. The result of the election was, however, also tempered by the legendary position Churchill had now come to occupy and in this way the chapter draws together the themes raised in earlier chapters.

Chapter 1

Prelude to War

Introduction

Winston Churchill had long been in the public eye since his escape from the Boers in 1899 and following his entry to Parliament in 1900. His pre-Second World War career saw him hold offices as Home Secretary, First Lord of the Admiralty and Chancellor of the Exchequer as well as several other lesser offices. The 1930s were, however, lean years for Churchill as they saw him increasingly alienated by his own party over his controversial opposition to the India Bill in 1934 and his support of the King over the abdication crisis in 1936. Most famously, he estranged himself with his demands for rearmament and his opposition to appeasement. But in holding these opinions, the popular view maintains, he alienated himself from the British public, both by being at odds with their opinions and by having an increasingly enfeebled platform on which to communicate his ideas.¹ Consequently, his appointment to the Admiralty in 1939 is popularly viewed as something of an unexpected resurrection whence he sprang to the premiership amidst a blaze of glory nine months later. This is, however, too simplistic a view.

The supposition that Churchill had fallen from public favour because of his opposition to appeasement suggests that there was a widespread support for the policy among the British people. Certainly, the media coverage from the time would suggest that this were so. Chamberlain himself “increasingly mistook his pliant press for real opinion...Chamberlain’s mistake was in believing that by controlling the press he was capturing public opinion.”² However, not everyone was thus deluded. Geoffrey Dawson, the editor of *The Times*, later spoke of how “There were plenty of people who sought a more realistic and moral policy towards the dictators of Europe”.³ MO was also at pains to point out that any historian who “accepts as statements of fact the numerous published assertions as to what the public of England are thinking about it all [that is, the

¹ This was due to the strengthening hold on the press as exercised by the Chamberlain Government. See Richard Cockett, *The Twilight of Truth*, (Wiedenfield and Nicholson, 1989) for more on Chamberlain’s control of the press.

² Cockett, *Twilight of Truth*, p. 122.

³ Dawson quoted in Peter Mellini, “Not the Guilty Men? *Punch* and Appeasement” in *History Today*, May 1996, pp. 38-44.

Munich crisis] he will, as so often before, be a typically lousy historian".⁴ Happily, there have been several exceptions to MO's expectations. Although many historians have held an ill-considered view of public opinion⁵ or else have been preoccupied with the political and diplomatic versions of events,⁶ others have heeded MO's warnings and agreed that the public did not embrace appeasement fully and quickly came to realise the ignominy of the Munich agreement.⁷ This stood Churchill in good stead. He escaped the calumny that came to be attached to the appeasers.⁸

Although this topic appears to lay outside the boundaries of this thesis by looking at the period prior to the war, Churchill's wartime reputation did depend to some extent upon his beliefs in the inter-war period and in this context a brief glance at appeasement is justified. For context, the chapter looks briefly at his career until the mid-1930s but places more emphasis on how his stance on rearmament and appeasement contributed to his rising status among the British public. It also reassesses the claim that Churchill was a virtually unknown public figure at this time. It goes on to explore how Churchill's public image developed whilst at the Admiralty. As many have claimed, this period was instrumental in consolidating Churchill's notoriety. Most commonly it is held that it enabled his warlike temperament to shine through whilst the activities of the Navy meant that he was also bathed in glory.⁹ But Churchill's time at the Admiralty revealed and depended upon much more besides. The chapter shows how several aspects of his public image developed at this time which were to gain in importance later in the war and also how he was portrayed in the media. Indeed, the media's coverage was central to the development of Churchill's image at this time, but this has not previously been studied in any depth. The chapter therefore provides a precursory study to the later development of the Churchill Legend and it reveals the basis upon which his later unalienable status was founded.

⁴ Mass-Observation, *Britain* (Penguin, 1939) p. 103.

⁵ Martin Gilbert, for example, entitles one chapter "Rearmament and Public Opinion" yet quotes politicians and the political élite, which bears little resemblance to true public opinion. Gilbert, *Britain and Germany Between the Wars*, (Longman, 1964).

⁶ For example, R.A.C. Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, (Macmillan, 1993).

⁷ William Rock, *British Appeasement in the 1930s*, (Edward Arnold, 1977) for example.

⁸ Churchill later wrote of when Baldwin declined to give him office, "now one can see how lucky I was. Over me beat the invisible wings". Churchill, *The Second World War: Volume 1: The Gathering Storm*, (Cassell, 1949) p. 162.

⁹ Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz*, (Jonathan Cape, 1991). Clive Ponting also makes much of Churchill stealing the Navy's limelight in *Churchill*, (Sinclair-Stevenson, 1994).

Churchill's Early Career

By the mid-1930s Churchill's name had been marred by his pursuit of a number of unpopular policies and he had gained a reputation in Whitehall of being a maverick and a renegade. Such criticisms centred on his regular failure to toe the party line and was indeed a reflection of the fact that he had twice changed party. He had first been elected to Parliament in 1900 as MP for Oldham after he had exercised all his family connections in order to be offered a seat. However, he soon realised the hypocrisy of his position serving as a Conservative declaring, "I am liberal in all but name" and, in an unsent letter made his feelings quite clear, "I hate the Tory party, their men, their words and their methods".¹⁰ Within a year of this realisation he dramatically crossed the floor of the House to take up a seat next to Lloyd George on the Liberal benches. As a Liberal MP, Churchill was quickly given office, serving firstly as Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies (1906-8), then as President of the Board of Trade (1908-1910), Home Secretary (1910-1911), and as First Lord of the Admiralty (1911-1915). Upon his resignation over the Dardanelles campaign, Churchill was offered the Chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster, but frustrated by his lack of influence on the Government and its war policy, asked to be transferred to France to serve on the front line. He was finally given a commission as lieutenant-colonel of a battalion of the Royal Scots Fusiliers until he was recalled to the War Cabinet by Lloyd George to serve as Minister for Munitions, which he did until 1918. Thereafter, he was Secretary of State for War and Air (1918-1921) and then Secretary for the Colonies until the Liberals were deposed following the 1922 General Election. In spite of holding a number of high offices, Churchill was never widely accepted within the party and just before the outbreak of the Great War many Liberals shared the belief that he had simply been "a guest in our Party" and that he never took party loyalty seriously.¹¹ Indeed, as Churchill changed party in 1904 Henry Lucy prophetically noted in his diary, "Winston Churchill may be safely counted upon to make himself quite as disagreeable on the Liberal side as he did on the Unionist. But he will be handicapped by the aversion that always pertains to a man who, in whatever honourable circumstances, has turned his coat".¹²

¹⁰ Randolph Churchill, *Winston Spencer Churchill*, Vol. 1, Companion volume part 2, (Heinemann, 1966) p. 751. Churchill to Lord Hugh Cecil (unsent) in Randolph Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill*, Vol. 2, (Heinemann, 1969) (Hereafter *WSC*) pp. 70-72.

¹¹ Cited in Cameron Hazlehurst, *Politicians at War* (Jonathan Cape, 1971) p. 252.

¹² Henry Lucy quoted in *ibid.*, p. 80.

With the turning of the tide of popular politics away from Liberalism following the First World War, Churchill lost his seat in Dundee in 1922. He lost again later in the year in a by-election contest at Leicester West and this, together with Asquith's proposal to ally with Labour against the Conservatives, once again prompted Churchill to change political allegiance. "Anyone can rat", he said afterwards, "but it takes a certain ingenuity to re-rat". Standing as a Constitutionalist but giving his "whole-hearted support to the Conservative Party", Churchill was returned to Parliament in 1924 as MP for Epping and held the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer in Baldwin's Government until the Labour victory of 1929.¹³ He remained a Conservative for the rest of his political career but, like the Liberals, many Conservatives remained distrustful of his party allegiance.¹⁴ Churchill proved impervious to party Whips and pursued his own agenda irrespective of the party line. He ranged against Governmental and parliamentary opinion on the abdication crisis in 1936 by advocating a policy of allowing the King "time and patience"¹⁵ and a few days after the affair had been announced in the press Churchill gave a woefully misplaced statement in Parliament. Harold Nicholson thought "Winston collapsed utterly in the House" and that he had "undone in five minutes the patient reconstruction works of two years".¹⁶ Churchill had earlier also flown against his party's line in connection with his relentless campaign in opposition to the Government's proposals for the future of India. Although Churchill had the sympathies of many Tory back-benchers over the course of the five year long debate, in the final vote in 1934 the Whips ensured party loyalty from all but the most renegade MPs, of whom Churchill was one. His relentless campaign against the Government's India Bill cemented his reputation as a rebel. Although Churchill had many back-bench sympathisers over the course of the five year debate, in the end the whips guaranteed party loyalty from all but the most renegade MPs, one of whom was Churchill. Governmental propaganda also ensured that Churchill's position was undermined by fomenting rumours that he was out to seize control of the party himself and by pointing out his association with other mavericks such as Lloyd George and Beaverbrook.¹⁷ But whilst his opposition to the India Bill may have damaged his political reputation, it is arguable whether it affected the public's view of him. People

¹³ Churchill's election manifesto, 12th October 1924, Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, (Heinemann, 1976), Vol. 5, p. 54.

¹⁴ See Chapter 5 for more on the attitude of the Conservative party towards Churchill.

¹⁵ Statement in the press, 6th December 1936.

¹⁶ Harold Nicholson, *Diaries and Letters, 1930-1939*, (edited by Nigel Nicholson, Collins, 1966) 9th December 1936, p. 284.

¹⁷ *WSC*, Vol. 5, pp. 478-79 and Churchill to Ormsby Gore, 10th April 1933, *WSC*, Vol. 5, Companion Vol. 2, p. 584.

were notoriously uninterested in foreign affairs¹⁸ and even Churchill admitted in 1931, “They [the public] were all worried by unemployment or taxation or absorbed in sport and crime news.”¹⁹

If the public had little sympathy with diplomatic matters, there was substantial interest in those issues which affected them directly. During his five year tenure as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Churchill adopted one momentous policy which divided opinion about his abilities: the decision to return to the gold standard. Supported by, among others, Montagu Norman, the Governor of the Bank of England, Sir John Bradbury and Sir Otto Niemeyer, both officials of the Treasury, and Austen Chamberlain, Churchill opted to return to pre-war rates. He came under bitter attack from John Maynard Keynes who, in his pamphlet *The Economic Consequences of Mr. Churchill*, predicted widespread unemployment and economic difficulties as a result. Indeed, the textile industry, ship building, steel, and coal all suffered in the latter half of the decade and Churchill’s decision was widely blamed.²⁰ Whether or not this were true is hardly the issue here, but it did antagonise certain sections of the Left.

By 1925 when Britain returned to the gold standard, Churchill’s opposition to socialism was already well established. It had precipitated his return to the Conservatives in 1924 but already in 1908, Churchill had spoken out violently and virulently against socialism. Presaging his comments on the Gestapo-like nature of socialism made during the 1945 General Election campaign, he somewhat disparagingly declared in Dundee, “Translated into concrete terms, Socialist society is a set of disagreeable individuals who obtained a majority for their caucus at some recent elections, and whose officials now look upon humanity through innumerable grilles and pigeon holes and over innumerable counters, and say to them “Tickets please”.”²¹ But in addition to his vocal opposition to left wing politics, an urban myth had developed regarding his treatment of the working man. The most infamous incident concerned his actions in dealing with the miners’ strike at Tonypany in 1910. Legend held that Churchill had sent in troops to quell their strike and force a return to work; in fact, Churchill had resisted the local mayors’ immediate request and halted the troops at Swindon until a contingent of metropolitan police officers had been given the chance of restoring the peace. When the rioting and

¹⁸ See the next section Prelude to War and Chapter 4.

¹⁹ Winston Churchill, *India*, (Thornton Butterworth, 1931) p. 68.

²⁰ This view has been dominant ever since, but see Susan Wolcott, “Keynes Versus Churchill: Revaluation and British Unemployment in the 1920s” in *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 53, No. 3, September 1993, pp. 601-28 for a tour through the literature and an alternative view.

²¹ Churchill quoted in Roy Jenkins, *Churchill*, (Pan Books, 2003) p. 132.

looting continued for a number of days, a detachment of the Lancashire Fusiliers was sent in to keep the peace whilst a Government arbitrator worked to resolve the dispute.²² Similar bellicose tactics were displayed through the remainder of the restless days over which he presided as Home Secretary and again as Chancellor during the General Strike of 1926 when he proposed that a convoy of food being taken from the docks to central London should be escorted by tanks and machine guns.

Churchill's belligerent attitude had lent itself well to the early days of 1915 when the stalemate of the Western Front swelled disappointment in press, Parliament and public. Churchill urged that a diversionary front be opened elsewhere where progress might be made and a significant blow be dealt to the Central Powers. Churchill favoured an attack on Gallipoli which would offer relief to the Russians fighting along the Turkish front as well as promising to maintain order in the Balkans. At first, Churchill advocated that a purely naval attack on Gallipoli would be enough to push the Turks out of the war and argued that a land attack would be costly and unnecessary. However, he soon succumbed to pressure and agreed that a joint attack was needed. The level of vacillation in both the planning and attack phases ensured that the campaign would be a disaster which it soon proved to be. Kitchener underestimated the strength of the Turkish defences and in any case favoured an offensive on the Western Front and thus reserved troops for that arena. Before the attack Churchill had warned in Cabinet, "If a disaster occurred in Turkey owing to insufficiency of troops, he [Churchill] must disclaim all responsibility".²³ In spite of such a qualification, in the debacle that ensued and in the political wrangling in the Asquith Government Churchill was made the scapegoat and was forced to resign. The episode haunted Churchill and stalked him through the election campaigns after the war when hecklers would frequently shout, "What about the Dardanelles?" Churchill's time out of office in the early 1920s helped to quieten such criticisms for he had time to write *The World Crisis* which offered him a platform on which to absolve himself.²⁴ The second volume dealt with the Gallipoli campaign and was serialised in the *Sunday Times*, indicating Churchill's desire to clear his name amongst the political élite.

The episode has since been grafted on to the post-Second World War Churchill Legend as evidence of his risk-taking bravado, determination and resolution in the face

²² Anthony More O'Brien, "Churchill and the Tonypandy riots" in *Welsh History Review*, Vol. 17, No. 1, January 1994, pp. 67-99.

²³ Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, Vol. 3, Companion vol. 1, (Heinemann, 1971), p. 574.

²⁴ Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis*, (Thornton Butterworth, 1923-31, five volumes).

of difficulty and it is easy to imagine that the public at once welcomed and feared his leadership on the outbreak of war in 1939, but this ignores how the Great War was remembered at the time. While this is hardly the place to engage in the debate, it is suffice to say that the legend of senseless slaughter had not yet fully developed and any blame still being lain at Churchill's door by 1939 for Gallipoli (and indeed there was little) concerned bureaucratic bungling rather than an abhorrence at his bloodthirstiness. This also raises the question of how much Churchill's early career affected people's perceptions of him in 1939. As will be argued below,²⁵ the public had a terribly short-term memory with regards to issues that did not concern them directly. Thus the legend of Tonypandy may have been remembered in Welsh mining communities, but it is unlikely to have been of much concern to, say, a shopkeeper in Twickenham nearly thirty years later. Similarly, the complex economic arguments regarding the gold standard are unlikely to have excited much reasoned debate in the greater number of homes fifteen years afterwards when Britain was being threatened with invasion. At the very most, for the majority of the people, Churchill's early career developed a picture of him as an independently-minded, spirited politician who was well-known for his right-wing views and as an antagonist of the Left; but at the very least it made him a well-known name.

A p p e a s e m e n t

If the public at least knew of Churchill through his earlier career, the 1930s did not augur well for his continued fame. Indeed, he struggled to find an audience and regularly complained of a campaign that prevented him from gaining any publicity. He maintained, for example, that John Reith, Director General of the BBC, openly refused to allow him to broadcast for eight years during the 1930s.²⁶ It is true that he was given little airtime during this period and his radio appearances were limited to charity appeals or else broadcasts to America (he made no political speeches) but to blame Reith entirely was perhaps an exaggeration.²⁷ It did reflect Reith's abhorrence of Churchill but it also

²⁵ See chapter 5 and *passim*.

²⁶ For a list of Churchill's complaints about the BBC see Sir Winston Churchill, Talk File, RCONT1, 1926-1939 at the BBC Written Archive (WAC).

²⁷ See Wenden, "Churchill, Radio, and Cinema" in Robert Blake and William Louis, *Churchill*, (Oxford University Press, 1993) pp. 215-240 for more on Churchill's broadcasts and use of the radio.

reflected Churchill's marginalised position: the BBC could hardly allow all back-benchers unlimited access to broadcasting.²⁸

In an attempt to gain an audience and, as David Irving would advocate, some money, Churchill also took to writing and in the mid-1930s several articles by him appeared in the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Mirror*, the *Sunday Chronicle*, the *News of the World*, and the *Evening Standard* warning of the Nazi threat.²⁹ However, the decreasing regularity with which these articles appeared reflected the increasing tension in the international situation. Indicating the difficulties faced by anti-appeasers in airing their views, in March 1938 just after the Anschluss, Churchill was sacked from the *Evening Standard*. The editor explained that Churchill's views on foreign affairs and the part which should be played by Britain were entirely opposed to the editorial team's and those of the proprietor, Lord Beaverbrook.³⁰ When Churchill subsequently went to work for the *Daily Telegraph*, Beaverbrook issued the order to "go get him" and launched a campaign of vilification in his newspapers.³¹ The Conservative newspaper, *Truth*, began a similar offensive to undermine Churchill since Chamberlain's administration was nervously aware of the offence that might be caused by negative coverage of Nazi regime in the British press in that it might upset the delicate balance of diplomatic relations.³² In order that this might not be so, the Government gradually exercised greater and greater control over what was and what was not publishable.³³ Churchill's articles, of course, fell into the latter category which undoubtedly contributed to the sense of alienation and

²⁸ In his diaries, Reith returns constantly to the theme of his dislike of Churchill. During one of his particularly bad depressions, he wrote, "About the only passion I show is in reviling politicians, especially Churchill" (20th May 1944). His dislike arose from Churchill's speaking abilities (5th June 1940) and partly "on account of his association with people like Beaverbrook and Duff Cooper" (4th July 1940) for whom he also had an intense dislike. John Reith (edited by Stuart Charles) *The Reith Diaries*, (Collins, 1975).

²⁹ David Irving, *Churchill's War*, (Veritas, 1989). Here Irving asserts that much of Churchill's activity in the 1930s was motivated mainly by making money. A selection of Churchill's newspaper articles from this period appear in Winston Churchill, *Step By Step*, (Thornton Butterworth, 1939). The book sold nearly 11,000 copies in the first eight months with three editions. Figures cited in Roy Jenkins, *Churchill*, (Pan Books, 2003) p. 544.

³⁰ R.J. Thompson quoted in Anne Chisholm and Michael Davie, *Beaverbrook: A Life* (Hutchinson, 1992) p. 349.

³¹ *Ibid.* p. 349.

³² Richard Cockett in "Communication, Ball and Truth" in *Historical Journal* Vol. 33, No. 1, 1990, pp. 131-142.

³³ For a discussion of Chamberlain and his control of the press see Cockett, *Twilight of Truth*. Franklin Reid Gannon examines the way in which newspapers depicted Germany, an important factor in Chamberlain's control, in *The British Press and Germany, 1936-1939* (Oxford University Press, 1971).

frustration which he later captured in his memoirs. However, contrary to the impression given in *The Gathering Storm*, his was not the only voice warning of the Nazi threat.³⁴

In the spring of 1936, Churchill was approached by Leslie Carruthers on behalf of a cross party organisation which held regular meetings where members could air their discontent with the international situation. The Anti-Nazi Council (ANC), or Focus on the Defence of Freedom and Peace as its members preferred it to be known, conducted “boycott propaganda” and “tried to stop Hitler with a peashooter”.³⁵ Carruthers felt that Churchill could improve upon such ineffective opposition by lending weight to their cause. He was, as Carruthers wrote to him, “a leader sent by fate to arouse our country to her duty”.³⁶ To achieve this the ANC offered him “as many platforms as he cared to use”.³⁷ Several meetings were held at prestigious locations around the country, such as the Manchester Free Trade Hall, but the largest meeting which was intended to launch the campaign nationwide was held at the Albert Hall on 3rd December 1936. Eugen Spier, a financial backer of the ANC, later wrote of the meeting that it was a great success with crowds of over 10,000 but lamented that coverage in the press was overshadowed by the abdication crisis, news of which broke the same evening.³⁸ Spier intimated that only *The Times* reported the meeting, but the *News Chronicle* gave it prominence on the second page of the next day’s edition with the headline “Churchill sounds war alarm”.³⁹ The *Daily Express* also covered the meeting, in contrast with its later denials that any threat of war existed, and reported “Churchill on the coming war” while the *Daily Telegraph* emphasised his “warning about creeds” and the simultaneous threat posed by both Communism and Nazism.⁴⁰ The royalist *Daily Mirror*, whilst mentioning the meeting, failed to report its purpose, using it merely to show that “7,000 cheer[ed] the King”.⁴¹ Of those newspapers which did note the reason for the meeting, all billed Churchill as the keynote speaker and only the *News Chronicle* quoted other speakers, who included Violet Bonham-Carter, Lord Lytton and A.M. Wall. No mention was made of the other prestigious figures on the platform listed by Spier who also wrote

³⁴ For more on the way *The Gathering Storm* affected the way in which appeasement was viewed historically see David Reynolds, “Churchill’s Writing of History” in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th Series, Vol. 9, 2001, pp. 221-247.

³⁵ Leslie Carruthers to Churchill, 3rd April 1936, CHAR2/283.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Eugen Spier, *Focus: A Footnote to the History of the 1930s*, (Woolf, 1963).

³⁹ *News Chronicle* 4th December 1936.

⁴⁰ *Daily Express* and *Daily Telegraph* 4th December 1936.

⁴¹ *Daily Mirror* 4th December 1936.

that Lytton was considered the main speaker, not Churchill.⁴² This shows that even though he may have been overlooked in Parliament, among the media, and consequently the public, a great deal of importance was still attached to his name. Contrary to Spier's claim that the ANC was instrumental in publicising Churchill at this time, Churchill was obviously still a renowned figure in his own right. It would be more accurate to say that the relationship was mutual: the ANC benefited from Churchill's extant notoriety, whilst Churchill gained larger audiences than would have otherwise been possible. Indeed, so important was the ANC to Churchill that A.H. Richards, the ANC's organising secretary, could afterwards claim to have undertaken "Mr Churchill's national campaign" in the second half of the 1930s.⁴³ However, whilst the ANC could lay a limited claim to having publicised Churchill, it had done little to enhance his standing with the Conservative party. His fraternisation with Trades Unionists, Labour and Liberal supporters only encouraged suspicions of party disloyalty and Conservative anti-appeasers rallied behind Eden rather than Churchill.⁴⁴

With the Anschluss in March 1938 and again with the questions hanging over the sovereignty of the Sudetenland, Churchill's warnings about Nazi expansionism were vindicated. Although at this point he was in no position to pressurise the Government in the pursuit of its foreign policy, he became a vociferous critic of the Munich pact the following year. He considered the agreement "sordid, squalid, subhuman and suicidal" and a "total and unmitigated defeat".⁴⁵ Here once again Churchill found himself an outcast. The immediate aftermath of Munich had found widespread support for Chamberlain in the House of Commons – if only because he had averted a bloody war for which Britain was ill-prepared. But such was the intensity of feeling that the power struggle between appeasers and their opponents became increasingly bitter and desperate. Political factions in Churchill's own constituency at Epping threatened his seat in the House of Commons when a member of his executive, C.N. Thornton-Kemsley, demanded a candidate "who will support the Prime Minister and the National Government in place of a Member who...constantly and almost, it seems, inevitably

⁴² Spier lists 75 people who appeared on the platform, many of whom later had close connections with Churchill in some capacity. These included Richard Acland, Philip Noel-Baker, Walter Citrine, Philip Guedalla, Lt. Col. Moore-Brabazon, Duncan Sandys, J.C. Wedgwood, Violet Bonham-Carter and Archibald Sinclair.

⁴³ A.H. Richards' Curriculum Vitae for the MoI, January 1940, CHAR2/387.

⁴⁴ See Paul Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front*, (Pimlico, 1993) chapter 9, especially pp. 323 and 328. R.A.C. Parker, *Churchill and Appeasement*, (Macmillan, 2000).

⁴⁵ Churchill quoted in William Manchester, *The Caged Lion* (Michael Joseph, 1988) p. 335. "The Munich Agreement", House of Commons, 5th October 1938 in Randolph Churchill (Ed.) *Into Battle*, (Cassell, 1941) pp. 40-53.

criticises the policy and actions of the Party's leader".⁴⁶ Indeed, any criticism of Chamberlain and his policy was met with short shrift at this time. Great pressure was exerted by the Government that the press and the BBC should toe the line and show support for appeasement.⁴⁷ Anti-appeasers, therefore, had few national platforms on which to raise their objections, and were forced to petition on a local level. Churchill made two such local appeals at meetings at Chigwell and Waltham Abbey in March 1939 which also served to rescue him from the second of the campaigns to remove him from his seat. As William Manchester commented, "Winston knew he had but to hire a hall or two...and his constituents would come gambolling back to him".⁴⁸ The vacillation of Churchill's constituents indicates the public's ill-ease with Chamberlain's policy and the increasing gap between leaders and led.

The events of March 1939 and the invasion of the rump Czech state highlighted this discontent even further and Churchill's warnings that Munich was "only the beginning of the reckoning" came true once again.⁴⁹ Suggestions of Churchill's promotion to the Cabinet had been made intermittently in the press since 1936, but it was not until the summer of 1939 that these became persistent and he was recognized as a prominent and prescient figure. The *Observer* launched the fresh campaign on 2nd July when it called for Chamberlain to reconstruct his Cabinet, although no names were mentioned.⁵⁰ The following day, however, the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Manchester Guardian* did not hesitate to commend Churchill. The *Daily Telegraph* noted how he "unite[d] a conspicuous gift of exposition and popular appeal" and prophetically commented, "Mr. Churchill has a strong, even masterful personality which estranges and antagonises some people, but strong and masterful personalities are just what the present situation demands".⁵¹ The *Yorkshire Post*, *Daily Mirror*, *Evening News*, *Daily Star* and *News Chronicle* all added their support for Churchill the following day. In the same month, men in sandwich boards were seen "even in Downing Street" promoting Churchill's inclusion in the Cabinet⁵² and over 600 advertising hoardings appeared around London demanding,

⁴⁶ Quoted in Kenneth Young, *Churchill and Beaverbrook*, (Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1966) p. 128.

⁴⁷ Richard Cockett, "The Foreign Office News Department and the struggle against appeasement" in *Historical Research*, Vol. 63, February 1990, pp. 73-85.

⁴⁸ Manchester, *The Caged Lion*, p. 378.

⁴⁹ "The Munich Agreement", House of Commons, 5th October 1938 in Churchill, *Into Battle*, pp. 40-53.

⁵⁰ This article followed a meeting of David Astor, the proprietor of the *Observer*, Anthony Eden, Harold Nicolson and Lord Camrose who all agreed that Churchill should sit on the Cabinet. Richard Cockett, *Twilight of Truth*, p. 112.

⁵¹ *Daily Telegraph* 4th July 1939.

⁵² Eugen Spier, *Focus*, p. 148.

“What price Churchill?”⁵³ With this anonymously instigated campaign, Churchill rose to greater prominence and Chamberlain’s resistance to his inclusion in the Cabinet highlighted Churchill’s plight all the more.⁵⁴

Pro-Churchillian sentiment on the part of the public predated this media interest in Churchill and many people were readily open to the suggestion of his return to Government. Two months before the renewed press campaign began just over half of the population was found to support the notion of Churchill’s inclusion in the Cabinet while a quarter was opposed to the idea – a rough proportion which will become familiar.⁵⁵ The majority by this date had come to question appeasement and was not afraid to accept the consequences if a more aggressive policy were pursued. Chamberlain, however, still clung to the belief that he was serving the public interest. Such a blinkered view had characterised the Tory leadership throughout the second half of the 1930s.

Baldwin’s approach to rearmament was governed by his interpretation of the League of Nations’ peace ballot of 1934. Whilst realising the need to rearm he was also under the impression that this would not be popular with the British public. The ballot had questioned eleven and half million British people about their commitment to wage war should the situation arise and on first sight the figures do seem to suggest that the British public supported non-intervention and disarmament, but as the MP Harold Nicolson pointed out, the ballot itself was flawed.⁵⁶ The main issue that was being questioned in the ballot was the public’s commitment to the League of Nations and whether or not Britain should intervene on the behalf of other countries should they be attacked. An overwhelming majority agreed that Britain should be a member of the League of Nations, whilst few were in favour of going to war. Such answers were, however, diametrically opposed, since the League of Nations stood for collective security and, if necessary, military engagement. This demonstrated a confusion on the part of the public over the intricacies of foreign policy. Nicolson pointed out that as a result of the

⁵³ The posters caused a great deal of speculation as to who was responsible for them. Some people accused Churchill of self-publicity but it was later admitted to by J.M. Beable, the managing director of a small firm who simply wanted people to be aware of the threat that was facing the country. *Advertisers’ Weekly* 17th August 1939.

⁵⁴ It was only on the outbreak of war that Chamberlain desisted and offered Churchill a place in the Cabinet, as he could no longer afford such a strong political opponent roguishly wandering the corridors of Westminster. Better it was to yoke him with office and thereby ensure his support for the Government.

⁵⁵ BIPO poll, May 1939. See Appendix 4, Table 1.

⁵⁶ League of Nations Peace Ballot. Appendix 4, Table 2. Harold Nicolson “British Public Opinion and Foreign Policy” in *Public Opinion Quarterly* Vol. 1, no. 1, January 1937, pp. 53-63.

Hoare-Laval Pact and the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, "British opinion was, in December 1935, prepared to go to war with Mussolini in order to defend the Covenant".⁵⁷ But whilst the public were prepared to fight over Abyssinia, they were largely sympathetic to German grievances with the Versailles Treaty and were not prepared to wage war over the invasion of the Rhineland in 1936: the British public were prepared to fight only if the cause was seen to be just. As Nicolson concluded, the ballot "expressed what the whole country wanted to *happen*: it did not express what they (sic) were prepared to *do*".⁵⁸

Later in the decade the prominent issues changed: no longer was membership of the League of Nations the key issue, instead the decision to rearm became the most important topic which then gave way to questioning the rights and wrongs of appeasement. No polls were taken on whether Britain should rearm, but in May 1937 the newly formed British Institute of Public Opinion (BIPO) published a poll which had found that 83 per cent of people anticipated another European war in the near future.⁵⁹ By the following year, Chamberlain's strenuous diplomatic attempts to avert war had not encouraged the hopes of the public: 70 per cent still thought that Chamberlain's policy of appeasement would do nothing to ensure peace and almost 60 per cent disagreed with the policy of appeasement.⁶⁰

By September 1938, war seemed almost inevitable and preparations for war at home continued apace as Chamberlain sat with Hitler at Berchtesgaden, Bad Godesberg and Munich attempting to negotiate peace. However, contrary to what was thought at the time, the public vacillated in their support for Chamberlain's policy. On his second trip to Germany, for instance, Chamberlain was jeered by the crowd at Heston airport.⁶¹ Undaunted, the media portrayed unified adulation after his return from Munich and widespread celebration at his having averted a cataclysmic war. In the newsreels he was heard to be cheered by vast crowds whilst the BBC gave a "splendidly half magical sense of sharing in events. The optimism of Chamberlain's voice kept millions comforted".⁶² The press also gave the impression of national unity for "during one whole week, no outsider reading an English newspaper could have guessed that an increasing proportion of the population were feeling once more increasingly bewildered, fearful and

⁵⁷ Ibid p. 60.

⁵⁸ Ibid p. 59.

⁵⁹ See Appendix 4, Table 3.

⁶⁰ See Appendix 4, Tables 4 and 5.

⁶¹ Manchester, *The Caged Lion*, p. 342.

⁶² Mass-Observation, *Britain*, p. 69.

ashamed”.⁶³ The delayed reaction to the terms of the Munich agreement was, however, overlooked by the Government. Once the details of the accord were known, MO claimed, the public turned against Chamberlain with “increasing fury”.⁶⁴ HI later echoed MO’s observations that “Munich found a peace-loving people disillusioned and ashamed but at the same time relieved”.⁶⁵

After Munich, opinion began to turn more strongly against Hitler: 93 per cent thought that he would not uphold his pledges to curb his aggressive territorial policies,⁶⁶ while 66 per cent were prepared to go to war for any such infringements.⁶⁷ The consistency of these figures – of some two-thirds of the population being opposed to appeasement and being prepared to fight – is mirrored in the consistency of the proportion who favoured Chamberlain’s pursuit of peace at any price. Around 20 per cent consistently agreed with appeasement and a similar figure thought that appeasement would bring a permanent peace and disagreed with Eden’s resignation as Foreign Secretary.⁶⁸ Chamberlain therefore was mistaken about public opinion: a sizeable minority may have supported appeasement, but a clear majority opposed it. This gave Churchill a head start in reclaiming public support. He was already associated with a more aggressive stance towards Hitler, a move supported by over half the population. While not claiming this meant an automatic acceptance of Churchill at this date, it did afford potential for greater popularity, especially as his reputation for prophecy solidified.

Given such fatalism amongst the majority of the public when war did come it was, on the whole, readily embraced. A few days before the outbreak of war, Basil Liddell-Hart noted how “most people are itching to be at them – indignant that we have not already declared war”.⁶⁹ All the tensions of the previous years were released in anticipation of the bomber-apocalypse and the people were generally relieved that the situation might be resolved once and for all. “The outbreak of war found people extraordinarily united in a determination to stop Hitler”, wrote HI. “Real anti-war feeling – pacifist feeling – was repressed”.⁷⁰ There was, however, a contingent amongst the public who still hoped for peace, although this number had diminished since the days

⁶³ Ibid. p. 105.

⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 69.

⁶⁵ HI Daily Report, 18th May 1940, INF1/264, Public Record Office.

⁶⁶ See Appendix 4, Table 6.

⁶⁷ See Appendix 4, Table 7.

⁶⁸ BIPO polls, March 1938, Table 5, March 1938, Table 7, October 1938, Table 8, February 1938. All Tables in Appendix 4. Eden resigned as Foreign Secretary in February 1938 as a result of dispute with Chamberlain over concessions to Italy.

⁶⁹ Liddell-Hart quoted in Cockett, *Twilight of Truth*, p. 120.

⁷⁰ HI Daily Report 18th May 1940, INF1/264.

of appeasement. HI recorded a persistent 10 per cent who still hoped for peace and of the twelve by-elections in 1940, four attracted pacifist candidates – if few votes.⁷¹

The public, then, was largely ready for the war which was facing them in 1939, but this was not matched by many of the country's leaders. The Cabinet was still dominated by pro-appeasers and apologists whose influence was hardly counterbalanced by Churchill's entry into the Cabinet on the outbreak of war; the public's desire for action was once again to be frustrated. As a man for whom 'peace was in his bones' and whose hands were tied by the alliance with the French, Chamberlain made every effort to discourage reprisal attacks by Germany, advocating the RAF drop leaflets rather than bombs whilst the BEF dug in along the Franco-Belgian border. This frustrated the majority of the public who wanted to "get tough",⁷² two-thirds of whom were opposed to any peace proposals.⁷³ Only Churchill, whose image as a belligerent politician had already been cultivated, showed any commitment in these early days to engage the enemy.

The Admiralty

On the outbreak of war, Chamberlain finally relented in his opposition to having Churchill in his Cabinet and appointed him First Lord of the Admiralty, a position he had held during the First World War. The Admiralty famously flashed "Winston is back" to the Fleet⁷⁴ and Churchill immediately took on his duties at the Admiralty, visiting dockyards and naval ships, inspiring those around him.⁷⁵ The press also relished his promotion and showed a great deal of interest in his new role. On 4th September, the *Daily Express* put his return to the Admiralty above all other news, including the outbreak of war. The other newspapers also gave a prominent position to his promotion, although the *Daily Mail* and *News Chronicle* gave greater weight to Lord Gort's appointment as Commander-in-Chief on their front pages.⁷⁶ Many carried the same photograph of Churchill on the steps of the Admiralty on the first full day of his

⁷¹ Votes gained by pacifist candidates in 1940 were: Southwark Central, 10th February, 16.8%, Battersea, 17th April, 7.4%, East Renfrew, 9th May, 19.3% and Northampton, 6th December, 6.6%.

⁷² MO File Report (hereafter MO FR) 99 *The Political Crisis*, April 1940 (Harvester, 1984).

⁷³ MO FR 63 *Peace – Sylt*, March 1940.

⁷⁴ Winston Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, p. 365.

⁷⁵ Vice-Admiral Whitworth to Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham on Churchill's visit to HMS *Hood* quoted in Arthur Marder, *Winston is Back*, (*English Historical Review Supplement*, 1972), p. 2.

⁷⁶ The *Daily Express*' main headline was "Fleet begins the blockade: Winston is back", 4th September 1939. *Daily Mail* and *News Chronicle* 4th September 1939.

appointment and emphasised different characteristics that would come to play an important part in his image later in the war.⁷⁷ The *Daily Mail* stressed his seriousness whilst the *Express* underlined his vigour and haste, writing of how he jumped out of his car and ran up the steps of the Admiralty. Obviously, the media exposure of Churchill just prior to the war enhanced his notoriety amongst the public and ensured extensive coverage once war had broken out. But it was Churchill's position as the head of the Navy that gained him the most attention.

As an island dependent on imports, Britain could ill-afford to cease its marine activity and thus both mercantile and military ships became legitimate targets for German U-boats. The newspapers carried daily stories of maritime victims of the war, with more triumphal headlines if the victim were a German U-boat, whilst the shelling of passenger liners and neutral ships threatened to incite anti-German feeling as it had during the First World War. Extensive coverage demonstrated the barbarity of the German Navy and instances in which they failed to adhere to the codes of conduct of the sea were regular features in the reports.⁷⁸ Churchill also denigrated German tactics, calling the magnetic mine, which had initially caused a significant number of losses, "about the lowest form of warfare that can be imagined".⁷⁹ The sinking of the passenger liner *Athenia* on the first day of the war and the conditions in which the prisoners of war were kept on board the "hellship" *Altmark* also testified to this German cruelty.⁸⁰ By contrast, much was made of the British sense of fair play and gallantry, and of course, heroism. In December 1939, the German merchant ship the *Bremen* was allowed to slip away despite being an easy target for the British submarine that had sighted it. The *Daily Express*' reaction was initially of disbelief and admonition at such ineptitude but then accepted that "our commander did the proper thing" upon the basis of an Admiralty statement that "the rules of sea warfare" precluded the sinking of the ship.⁸¹ Churchill also referred to the episode in his broadcast of 18th December where he emphasised that unlike German counterparts, British ships and submarines "do not wage war on neutral vessels...They are not allowed...to sink merchant ships without warning...They do not attack humble fishing boats".⁸² Significantly, the British public did not share such sentiments of fair

⁷⁷ The significance of this photograph will be examined in Chapter 3.

⁷⁸ For example, where warnings were not issued to vessels about to be attacked by U-boats or where unarmed fishing boats were strafed and bombed by enemy aircraft.

⁷⁹ "Traffic at Sea", House of Commons, 6th December 1939, Churchill, *Into Battle* pp. 147-153.

⁸⁰ All of the popular newspapers called the *Altmark* "the hellship". MO FR 52, US 6, March 1940.

⁸¹ *Daily Express* "Why didn't we sink the Bremen?" leader, 13th December 1939.

⁸² "The Battle of the River Plate", broadcast, 18th December 1939, Churchill, *Into Battle* pp. 154-156.

play and when asked by the *Daily Express* “would you have sunk the *Bremen*?” 75 per cent of people asked in Harwich replied that they would.⁸³

Shortly after the incident of the *Bremen* came perhaps the most famous British naval battle of the war: the Battle of the River Plate. For several days before the *Graf Spee* was scuttled outside Montevideo harbour, the press had carried stories that the *Admiral Scheer*, as the *Graf Spee* was mistakenly thought to be, was being hunted in the South Atlantic. When the news and the photographs were released of the *Graf Spee*’s sinking on 18th December, public interest was therefore already running high. Churchill’s third broadcast of the war, in which he described the heroism of the ships involved, together with the subsequent suicide of the German Captain, Hans Langsdorff, helped to keep the story in the forefront of the public’s imagination. Equally, when the crews of the *Exeter* and *Achilles* returned in February 1940 lavish celebrations accompanied them. The *Daily Herald* originally objected to any form of hero worship, and quoted one sailor from the *Ajax* who said that he was simply doing his job.⁸⁴ The *Daily Express*, by contrast, called for maximum publicity.⁸⁵ As it was, the crews of the two ships did receive a hero’s welcome and Churchill was pictured in all the newspapers and newsreels cheering their return as the *Exeter* sailed into Plymouth. After a few days’ leave, a victory parade through the streets of London was held which attracted tens of thousands of spectators and a formal luncheon for the sailors was given at the Guildhall. Interest from all the press, including the usually sober and rather reserved *Daily Herald*, was immense and included large photographs of the occasion, details of individual sailor’s heroic deeds, and even the quantities of turtle soup consumed by the men at the luncheon.⁸⁶ Churchill’s speech was also widely publicised. All newspapers carried at least one full page of coverage, many carried more, which, in the days of newsprint rationing, indicated the importance attached to the occasion. His speech was also recorded, together with the speeches of other dignitaries, and was broadcast shortly afterwards. In fact, the luncheon did as much to publicise Churchill as it did the crew of the two ships and by this time his stock was said to be “very high”.⁸⁷ The crowds who cheered the sailors also demanded, “ ‘We want Winnie!’ until the First Lord opened his window and bowed... ‘One of our finest tonics’, the Lord Mayor said.”⁸⁸ The return of the *Achilles* to

⁸³ *Daily Express* 14th December 1939.

⁸⁴ *Daily Herald* 5th February 1940.

⁸⁵ *Daily Express* 16th February 1940.

⁸⁶ See press reports for 24th February 1940.

⁸⁷ *Daily Herald* 1st March 1940.

⁸⁸ *Daily Herald* 24th February 1940.

New Zealand in March prompted similar adulation although coverage was not quite so exhaustive. It meant, though, that the Battle of the River Plate was kept at the forefront of the public mind and *Picture Post* produced a special commemorative issue, a film was produced wherein the sailors played the same roles that they had in the battle,⁸⁹ and both *Picture Post* and the MoI later published a booklet, *The Battle of the River Plate*, all of which helped to perpetuate the myth of the event and the heroism of the Navy.

Other exploits of the Navy which gained widespread notoriety during the twilight war period included the release of almost three hundred British prisoners of war from the *Altmark* after it had been immobilised in a Norwegian fjord. The order to board the ship came from Churchill himself who gave authority to the captain of the British ship, the *Cossack*, to open fire if necessary. The operation was risky as it violated Norwegian neutrality and had little intrinsic value except to rescue the prisoners and to grab the headlines, which indeed it did.⁹⁰ The *Sunday Chronicle* called it “the greatest naval story of the war” and the press gave it wide – if misleading – publicity.⁹¹ The campaign in Norway gave further opportunities for the Navy to demonstrate its prowess whilst the Army, although cheered at first, inevitably lost some of its credibility as the retreats began.⁹²

Such activity on the part of the Navy meant that it took on a disproportionate importance in the eyes of the public and MO found that it was applauded in 55 per cent of its newsreel appearances.⁹³ This compares with 30 per cent applause for the RAF after the raid on Sylt in March, whilst the Army received no applause at all. Attendant with this interest in the Navy was interest in Churchill himself. Up to May 1940, Churchill appeared in newsreels more frequently than Chamberlain, coming second only to the King and Queen.⁹⁴ Churchill also featured more regularly in the press and

⁸⁹ The film, *For Freedom*, was not, however, received particularly well. William Hickey, leader writer in the *Daily Express*, referred to it as “yesterday’s joint warmed up”. *Daily Express* 17th April 1940.

⁹⁰ For a fuller account see Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, Volume VI*, (Heinemann, 1983) pp. 151-54. See also Arthur Marder who claimed that the operation was designed solely to be a morale boost. *Winston is Back*, p. 30.

⁹¹ *Sunday Chronicle* 18th February 1940. The Sunday newspapers and the subsequent dailies all contained stories of the appalling conditions in which the prisoners were kept. There were, however, factual discrepancies between them, some claiming that they were fed only bread and water, others that they had a varied diet. See MO FR 52 US March 1940.

⁹² MO FR 141 *Newsreels* (2), May 1940.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ MO claims Churchill appeared in 13 newsreels between October 1939 and May 1940 (File Report 141) whilst Chamberlain appeared in five. Figures from the British Universities Film and Video Council, however, indicates a range between 1 and 13, depending on the newsreel company. www.bufovc.ac.uk.

photographs of him appeared far more often than photographs of Chamberlain.⁹⁵ The discrepancy between the two reflected Churchill's centrality to the active war effort. Shipping and the activities of the Navy were far more newsworthy than many of the policy decisions with which Chamberlain was involved.

Through September and October, Churchill's most regular public statements in the House of Commons were of shipping losses, both military and mercantile, which were then widely reported in the press. Such announcements soon identified him with all shipping news, eclipsing the work of the Minister of Shipping, Sir John Gilmore, and promoted Churchill as the personification of the Navy. Therewith Churchill came to be viewed as personally responsible for the Navy's successes. The *Daily Express*, for example, carried a photograph of a captured U-boat crew with the headline "These are the men who will shoot on sight" followed by a photograph of Churchill with the caption "and this is the man who caught them", ignoring, in the headline at least, the role of the British seamen.⁹⁶ The idea that Churchill was the personification of all matters maritime rapidly gained in momentum. By mid-November it was common to see Churchill in cartoons whenever a point was being made about the Navy or shipping in general, eclipsing the erstwhile image of a bulldog in a sailor's hat (Figure 1).⁹⁷



Figure 1 *News of the World* 29th October 1939

⁹⁵ Over twenty photographs of Churchill appeared in the five most popular newspapers between September 1939 and May 1940, as opposed to less than half that number of Chamberlain, of which two were of his feet!

⁹⁶ *Daily Express* 1st November 1939.

⁹⁷ The Navy was also portrayed as John Bull in a sailor suit but often this was a more masculine-looking version than the usual paunchy image. In the 1930s this was also complemented by a small boy in a sailor suit, especially in the depiction of the Japanese Navy. Gill Sinclair, *The Cultivation of Public Opinion on the Far Eastern War, 1941-1945*, MA dissertation, University of Kent, 1996.

Such cartoons were especially prolific in the most popular Sunday newspaper, the *News of the World*, which, between November 1939 and February the following year, carried a cartoon of Churchill on an almost weekly basis. A favourite theme was Churchill's delight at the number of German ships that were being scuttled, depicted rather lamely by Churchill in various situations with large numbers of coal scuttles (Figures 2 and 3). Such personification of the Navy and of shipping was never afforded Gilmore or Churchill's successor at the Admiralty, A.V. Alexander.

At an early date, then, Churchill had come to symbolise the most heroic and active movement on the military front, but his organisational abilities were also appreciated at home. The first few months of the war were characterised by a series of bureaucratic bumbles and charges of inefficiency aimed at the top levels of Government. The MoI became the principle scapegoat for this but examples were manifold and caused

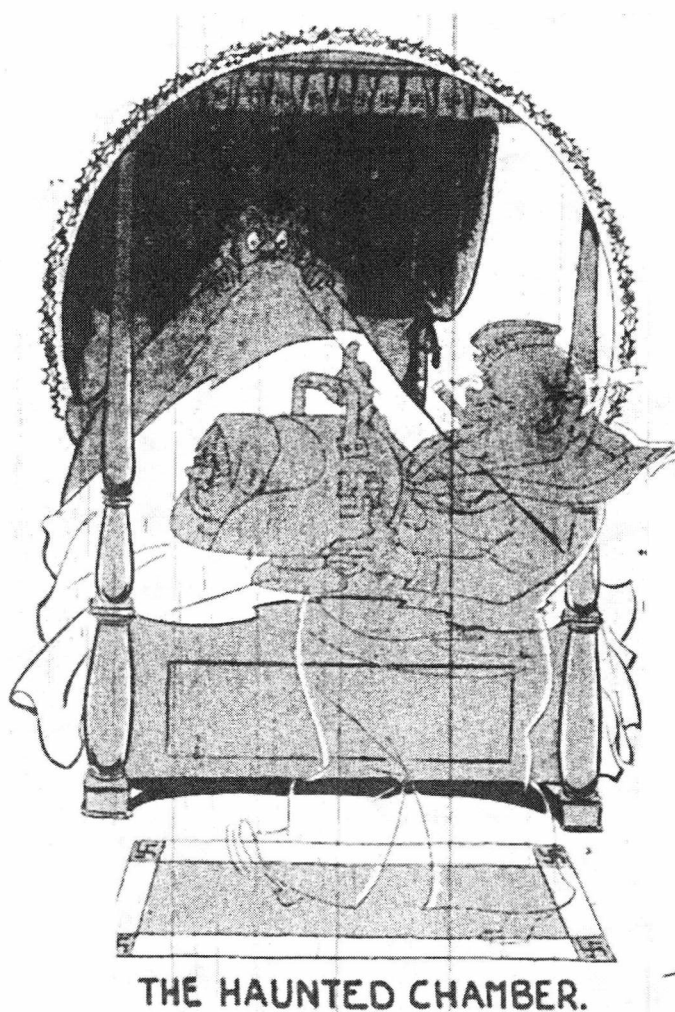


Figure 2 *News of the World* 24th December 1939



Figure 3 *News of the World* 17th March 1940

a great deal of resentment. One particular cause for opprobrium was the new wartime regulations imposed on the public and the subsequent prosecutions for seemingly minor infringements, especially of the blackout. Trivial cases were tried wherein a house light was momentarily turned on whilst the occupant was putting up the blackout, or where cigarettes were lit without taking sufficient precautions to shield the flame. It was quickly pointed out how unfair such prosecutions were when public buildings regularly breached the regulations. One such guilty party was the Admiralty which was shown, in a rather indistinct photograph, to have a large number of lights showing.⁹⁸ The Admiralty explained that it was difficult to ensure all windows were properly blacked out owing to the building having seven hundred large windows and that it was in constant operation. Rather than any other lesser representative of the Admiralty responding, it was the First Lord himself who wrote a “stinging note” to rectify the situation, demonstrating his concern for fairness and equality as well as his determination to get things done.⁹⁹ Such was the faith in his abilities and perceived powers that appeals were made for him to intervene in matters which were beyond his jurisdiction such as to prevent fish being thrown back into the sea.¹⁰⁰ This was, however, also due to Churchill’s tendency to interfere with matters outside his own role which caused resentment among some of his Cabinet colleagues. With regard to the example above, Churchill had called for a policy of “utmost fish” so that the British public might have enough to eat which should scarcely have been the concern of the First Lord of the Admiralty.¹⁰¹ Whilst this meddling on Churchill’s part may have annoyed his colleagues, in the media it was viewed as testimony to his ability to get things done; he was without doubt ‘the man of action’. In the public’s demand for strong leadership from the Government, Churchill was singled out as being the only one who was not guilty of ineptitude.

A significant contribution to these images of Churchill was made in German propaganda which regularly appeared in the British press in the early weeks of the war in order to demonstrate its absurdity. The majority of the German cartoons which appeared in the British press at this time featured Churchill as opposed to Chamberlain or other members of the Government, demonstrating the German preoccupation with him - or else the British obsession. One particularly grotesque example of German

⁹⁸ *Daily Mirror* 8th October 1940.

⁹⁹ *Daily Mail* 10th October 1939.

¹⁰⁰ *Daily Express* 15th November 1939.

¹⁰¹ See Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill Volume VI*, pp. 165-66 for a fuller account of the origins of the policy of ‘utmost fish’.

propaganda appeared in the *Daily Herald* three weeks into the war. An extensive passage was taken from a German radio broadcast entitled “Something about Mr. Churchill”.

He is often to be seen in the restaurant of the House of Commons when he thinks he is unobserved. He is short-legged. He has lost his hair. His eyes are penetrating and watery. His chin is brutal and he is short of breath...There he sits with his glass of port and his big cigar, with a bloody red steak in front of him which he puts into his mouth in big pieces which he chews, and talks until the blood trickles out of his mouth. Mr. Churchill has been eating warm blood for fifty years...[He has] a cold joy at pain and blood. He must always see others suffer...[He is] the Servant of Satan.¹⁰²

Such blood-thirstiness readily lent itself to the image of Churchill as a warmonger and reinforced that he was “the chief instigator of this war”, taking the image of him as the man of action one step further.¹⁰³ German radio delighted in his acceptance of the chairmanship of the Military Co-ordination Committee in April as it proved his elevation from “warmonger to grand-warmonger”.¹⁰⁴ On account of his guilt, he was blamed in German propaganda for causing all the suffering brought about by the war and in one cartoon was depicted as a hungry lion prowling around the starving children of Europe, stalking them as his prey (Figure 4).¹⁰⁵ Several cartoons developed the image of him personifying the Navy but perhaps the most predominant were the accusations of Churchill’s dishonesty.¹⁰⁶

As First Lord of the Admiralty, Churchill took it upon himself to announce shipping losses on a regular basis, which were bound to be disputed by the Germans, just as German claims were disputed by the Admiralty.¹⁰⁷ One long-running wrangle concerned the status of the *Ark Royal* which the Germans claimed to have sunk – several times.¹⁰⁸ Churchill addressed the issue in his speech on the war at sea in November:

¹⁰² *Daily Herald* 21st September 1939.

¹⁰³ Goebbels’ speech reported in *Daily Express* and *Daily Herald* 23rd October 1939.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in Manchester, *The Caged Lion*, p. 349.

¹⁰⁵ *Völkischer Beobachter* cartoon in the *Daily Herald* 22nd November 1939.

¹⁰⁶ For example Churchill was depicted in an Admiral’s uniform wearing ships for shoes and walking over the ocean whilst being attacked from above by planes. “Heavens!”, he declares, “it is raining and my shoes are not water-tight” from *Lustige Blätter* in the *Daily Herald* 17th November 1939. See also *Daily Express* 4th December 1939.

¹⁰⁷ A shouting match almost began late in September when “less than two hours after the Germans had boasted they had sunk the British Fleet in the North Sea, Churchill announced in the House of Commons, ‘You lie.’” Goebbels then returned the accusation, only for Churchill’s words to be upheld by the MoI. *Daily Express* 28th September 1939.

¹⁰⁸ The first claim was made by Lord Haw-Haw on 16th October 1939, where he also claimed that the *Royal Oak*, the *Repulse* and the *Hood* had been sunk. One wry cartoon showed a German broadcaster announcing, “You will remember that I told you last week we had blown up the entire



Figure 4 *Daily Herald*, 22nd November 1939

It is interesting to note that one of the most valuable prizes was captured from the enemy by the *Ark Royal*, which the German wireless has sunk so many times. When I recall the absurd claims which they are accustomed to shout around the world, I cannot resist saying we should be quite content to engage the entire German Navy, using only the vessels which at one time or another they have declared they have destroyed.¹⁰⁹

However, in March the newspapers carried photographs verifying that the *Ark Royal* was undamaged, proving Churchill's integrity.¹¹⁰ Goebbels' accusations that Churchill had been responsible for the sinking of the *Athenia* similarly back-fired for instead of losing him credibility, Churchill's reputation for honesty became unassailable.¹¹¹

For some time Churchill had seen that one should "tell the truth to the British people", that they "may be offended at the moment but if you have told them exactly

British fleet – well, since then they have built a new one and we have blown that up as well", *News Chronicle* 28th October 1939.

¹⁰⁹ "The Loss of the *Royal Oak* and the War at Sea", House of Commons, 8th November 1939, *Into Battle*, pp. 136-141.

¹¹⁰ For example, *Daily Herald* and *Daily Express* 27th March 1940.

¹¹¹ Goebbels first accused Churchill of sinking the *Athenia* on 7th September 1939, and repeated the claim in a broadcast on 22nd October 1939.

what is going on you have insured your self against complaints and protests which are very unwelcome when they come home, on the morrow of some disillusion".¹¹² Sadly, the embryonic Ministry of Information (MoI) did not share this approach. In a memorandum drawn up before the war the MoI advised, "operations by or against submarines should not be mentioned...Nothing should be published about the destruction of any enemy submarine or capture of its crew". Defence Notice 3/NS echoed this view: "No mention should be made of any success of, any mishap to, or any movement, therefore, of any of His Majesty's ships of war".¹¹³ However, within three days of the outbreak of the war Churchill had been persuaded by the Admiralty and had persuaded the War Cabinet that these notices did not "of course, preclude the Admiralty from initiating whatever announcement (whenever they like), regarding successes, failures, loss or damage of British or enemy men-of-war".¹¹⁴ In other words, Churchill claimed the right to announce anything he wished.

The role of Churchill as the bearer of news was complemented by Churchill as the commentator on the progress of the war. His first broadcast on the war in October gave an overview of the war situation and a rhetorical glance at what might be.¹¹⁵ He gave, in line with the Government view, a realistic prognosis of the duration of the war and stated that "rough times lie ahead", yet he gave encouragement that the outcome would be good and anticipated his later and more famous determined utterances from 1940: "Now we have begun. Now we are going on. Now, with the help of God, and the conviction that we are the defenders of civilisation and freedom, we are going to persevere to the end". He would not tolerate peace proposals but would see the war through to victory. The *Daily Express* called it an "invigorating and heartening account" and noted "Churchillian sparkle when he said the U-boats were being hunted not without mercy but with zeal and 'not altogether without relish'".¹¹⁶ The *Daily Herald* offered the full text of the speech but with little comment, except to underline his vigorousness in his prosecution of the war, while the *Daily Mail* also emphasised his commitment to wage war until victory was won.¹¹⁷

Churchill's reputation for honesty was consolidated in his next major speech in which he announced the details of the sinking of the *Royal Oak* whilst at anchor in Scapa

¹¹² *Hansard*, 23rd November 1932, vol. 272, col. 87.

¹¹³ MoI and D-notice in memorandum, Churchill to War Cabinet, 6th September 1939, CHAR19/4.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ "The First Month of War", 1st October 1939, Churchill, *Into Battle*, pp. 130-135.

¹¹⁶ *Daily Express* 2nd October 1939.

¹¹⁷ *Daily Herald* and *Daily Mail* 2nd October 1939.

Flow, the base of Britain's Home Fleet.¹¹⁸ A U-boat had penetrated the defences and sent in two waves of torpedoes sinking the ship almost instantaneously with the loss of 820 lives. Such a breach of security at one of Britain's main naval bases caused considerable embarrassment to the Admiralty, although Herbert Morrison later placed the blame on Churchill's predecessor, Lord Stanhope. Neither did the *Daily Express* blame Churchill but rather strengthened his position by exhorting, "Trust Churchill", adding that "if mistakes have been made, Mr. Churchill is the man to put them right".¹¹⁹ Churchill's speech also announced the loss of a British submarine, the *Oxley*, and gave exact figures of how much tonnage had been lost due to enemy action. However, the pattern emerged during the first few months of the war that such facts would be given first in the House of Commons; his broadcasts were reserved for more general summaries and exhortation. His second broadcast was exemplary of this, which was also filmed and distributed by the newsreel companies. It was not, however, held in such great esteem. In fact, the "opinion generally expressed about Churchill's [broadcast on 12th November] was that it was deplorable" and it made "one more doubtful about the efficacy of Mr. Churchill's broadcasts".¹²⁰ Nevertheless, Churchill's attention to detail and the surprise additional information encouraged the public to set great faith in whatever was announced by Churchill. As MO later found, "the odds were in favour of a full belief in the authority" of the inflated press stories about the horrific conditions in which prisoners had been kept on board the *Altmark* because of the "full backing of the Admiralty, and the special aura attaching to statements from the Admiralty (Churchill)".¹²¹

Whether or not the figures given by Churchill in his speeches were accurate has since been called into question by several people, including Admiral Godfrey who later recalled that Churchill "did not hesitate to tell [the public] the truth or to paint a rosy picture that had no connection with reality".¹²² Nevertheless, at the time and in the absence of any other statistics (except those of the disbelieved German propaganda), the public were grateful for Churchill's honesty and frankness, that he would share both good and bad news and trust them with the facts more or less as they happened. The press, on the whole, were also grateful for his announcements of news since in the early

¹¹⁸ "The Loss of the Royal Oak and the War at Sea", House of Commons, 8th November 1939, Churchill, *Into Battle*, p. 136-141.

¹¹⁹ *Daily Express* 9th November 1939.

¹²⁰ Edward Shackleton to R. Machonachie, 15th December 1939 and Machonachie 15th December 1939, RCONT, (WAC).

¹²¹ *US* 6th March 1940. Parentheses in original.

¹²² Admiral Godfrey cited in Paul Addison, *The Road to 1945*, (Cape, 1975) p. 79.

stages of the war the Admiralty tended to favour silence and viewed pressmen with suspicion. Churchill's opinion was clearly that "If the Admiralty could have their own way they would prefer a policy of complete silence".¹²³ This was characteristic of all the services and it caused unending criticism, appeals and requests for information. After two weeks of war the *Daily Mail* sarcastically posed, "[the] Admiralty at last admits what Fleet Street had known for some time. 'A number of U-boats have been sunk.' Even now the announcement is grudging in character. We are not told how many. There may be sufficient reason for such reticence. But why are we not given account of the gallantry and resource which produced this success?"¹²⁴ The *Daily Express* similarly asked, "Is the war supposed to be a secret? The Admiralty and the Air Ministry are always trying to make a secret of it. On Sunday night five merchant ships were sunk by mines. The Admiralty refused to publish the fact until nearly midnight, when the First Lord intervened."¹²⁵ The distinction between the Admiralty and Churchill drawn by the *Express* here showed how his public image diverged from his private opinions and further consolidated his image of forthrightness as opposed to the incompetence of officialdom.¹²⁶

Churchill's reputation for fact-giving, however, did not always attract a positive press. Suspicions were raised that he deliberately withheld information so that he might be the sole bearer of glad tidings in his speeches. His announcement of the details of the sinking of the *Royal Oak*, for example, was long in coming and, wrote the *News Chronicle*, might have been released sooner.¹²⁷ In this way, when Churchill did make his speech people were thirsting for information about the *Royal Oak* incident, heightening their gratitude for Churchill's facts. The *Daily Mail* was similarly critical, "the public look forward to the periodic reviews of our war progress made by the Defence Ministers in Parliament. But there is no justification for withholding important details about events which have already aroused public anxiety merely in order that the stage may be better dressed when Ministers take their weekly bow."¹²⁸ Indeed giving facts was so important to Churchill that when the unfortunate Vice-Admiral Hallett inadvertently stole Churchill's thunder in one broadcast and gave information which Churchill had reserved

¹²³ Admiralty to Ministry of Information, 6th September 1939, INF1/857.

¹²⁴ *Daily Mail* 16th September 1939.

¹²⁵ *Daily Express* 22nd November 1939.

¹²⁶ Later, though, the stock of the Admiralty rose and instead of disparaging it journalists thought the "Admiralty are (sic) of all the Government departments the most co-operative to the press". *US* 6th March 1940.

¹²⁷ The *Royal Oak* was sunk 14th October; Churchill's speech came on 8th November. *News Chronicle* 16th October 1939.

¹²⁸ *Daily Mail* 18th October 1939.

for himself, Hallett was abruptly despatched to sea in punishment.¹²⁹ On another occasion, at a time when the Government's censorship policy was under constant fire from the press, Churchill announced in his broadcast the arrival of Canadian troops in Britain. This information had been released to the press the day before with the understanding that it would not be published for a further three days. Churchill's premature statement, therefore, did not "add to his popularity with journalists".¹³⁰ The *Spectator* was a little more forgiving and perhaps a little more representative of public opinion too:

The real fact is that Mr Churchill was guilty of an indiscretion. The best censorship in the world could not prevent the First Lord of the Admiralty from disclosing news unless he imposed on himself, as Ministers should do, the same self-denying ordinance as that by which the Press is bound. It was Mr Churchill's fault, but because of his many virtues he will be forgiven.¹³¹

Despite this indiscretion, Churchill's stock had indeed risen by the end of December to sufficient proportions that his reputation remained untarnished by such criticism from embittered newspapers. As early as October, Churchill had become a public figure of such standing that people began to name their children after him¹³² and interest was shown in his family.¹³³ By November, he had come to symbolise the Navy and his importance as a national figure was beginning to be realised. One *Daily Express* reporter, after speaking with Professor Messerschmidt, whom the Germans had invited people to contact to prove that he had not fled Germany, found himself at a loss to reply to the Professor's "Heil Hitler". "At first I tried 'Heil England'. But that hardly seemed enough, so I added; 'Heil Churchill' ".¹³⁴ At the beginning of December, Churchill was also featured in a cartoon saluting the *Rawalpindi* (Figure 5). A simple armed merchant cruiser, the *Rawalpindi* had been engaged in a bitter fight with two German battleships in which it suffered immeasurable damage, and one by one, its guns were destroyed.

¹²⁹ Story related in Paul Addison, *Road to 1945*, p.79.

¹³⁰ *New Statesman and Nation* 23rd December 1939.

¹³¹ *Spectator* 22nd December 1939.

¹³² Anthony and Leslie, after Eden and Hore-Belisha, were also popular names besides Winston.

Interestingly, Neville was not mentioned. *Daily Mirror* 9th November 1939.

¹³³ For example, Randolph's engagement (*Daily Mirror* 30th September 1939), his wedding (*Daily Express*, *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Mail* and the newsreel companies, 5th October 1939), Clementine Churchill's slight car accident (*Daily Express* 25th September 1939) and Mary Churchill's show jumping (*Daily Express* 17th April 1940), Diana Churchill (*Picture Post* 17th February 1940). For discussion of the coverage of Randolph's wedding see Chapter 3.

¹³⁴ *Daily Express* 24th November 1939.



Figure 5 *News of the World*, 3rd December 1939

Nevertheless, the crew kept fighting with whatever weapons remained until the ship sank with a loss of 265 lives. The cartoon that appeared in the *News of the World* was a tribute to their heroism and shows Churchill saluting their efforts. Also depicted in the cartoon were other well-established personifications of Britain and Britishness – John Bull, Britannia, and Nelson – hinting at the place Churchill was to occupy in the history of the country.

It is undoubted that Churchill's appeal to the public was due in large part to the facts he gave in his speeches and broadcasts, which were all the more important in the

absence of other news. That the Navy was the principle actor in the war also helped to boost Churchill's standing with the public and generated the image of him as a man of action, both military and administrative. The foundations were also present of characteristics which would later be developed: his commitment to victory and his abilities as an orator.

C o n c l u s i o n

The gradual rise in the momentum of admiration for Churchill from the outbreak of war until the Norway crisis the following May established him as a crucial figure in the central direction of the war. By many, he was tipped for the premiership should anything happen to Chamberlain although this was not necessarily a ubiquitous sentiment.¹³⁵ During this period, the media adopted an adulatory tone in all its reports of Churchill, be it for his pugnacity, his ability to inspire a sense of urgency or his fact-giving. However, it is potentially misleading to ascribe the media's enthusiastic embrace of Churchill to the public as well. Unfortunately, HI was not active in this period and the BBC listener survey was embryonic, whilst MO and BIPO did not address the issue of Churchill's personal popularity. It is difficult, therefore, to identify public opinion more comprehensively at this time. That his popularity should not be studied by MO and BIPO does suggest that his standing with the public was not so phenomenal; had it been so, it would have been noted and investigated. It is possible, however, to surmise that he did gain some popular support by embodying a number of characteristics that were appealing to a large proportion of the public.

Contrary to the popular view, the majority of people were dissatisfied with Chamberlain's policy of appeasement, especially as Hitler's territorial demands became ever more aggressive. Consequently, "the great bulk" of the people considered that the war was "a necessary war and must be fought to victory" once they overcame their initial fears.¹³⁶ Obviously, few hoped for a protracted war, indeed many dreaded a return to the stalemate of the trenches. But Chamberlain's and the appeasers' effeteness and reluctance to engage the enemy suggested a lingering impasse that had little hope of resolution. By contrast, Churchill's vigour and belligerent spirit promised a quick

¹³⁵ For example, the *Sunday Pictorial*, 1st October 1939, Harold Nicolson, *Diaries and Letters 1939-1945*, (edited by Nigel Nicolson, Collins, 1967) 26th September 1939, p. 37 and Hannen Swaffer, *Daily Herald* 5th February 1940 and 2nd April 1940.

¹³⁶ MoI report for the Home Office, 27th February 1940, HO199/436.

resolution and an early return to normality. Churchill's tenure at the Admiralty was vital in cementing this image. The operations undertaken by the Navy in the twilight war period demonstrated that Churchill was the man of action and, in the eyes of the public, this meant victory. His speeches repeatedly gave voice to such sentiments and such was the press' willingness to believe in Churchill - just as they had once wished to believe in Chamberlain - that when the time came, Churchill's connection with victory quickly passed into legend.

Churchill's incumbency at the Admiralty was also an important precursor for his later standing by establishing his reputation as a credible politician. In giving him office, Chamberlain sanctioned him as a trusted member of the Government and he ceased to be the rogue MP that he had been in the 1930s. On this foundation, Churchill's probity flourished and thanks to his sound understanding of the public (at this stage in the war at least) gave people what they wanted to hear: facts. Although today the accuracy of the figures can be disputed, what is important is that in 1939 and 1940 the British public believed them. In the early months of the war, people were mistrustful of the British press and BBC, sensing that they were channels of propaganda deliberately seeking to pervert the truth and manipulate opinion. Corroboration was sought in Lord Haw-Haw's broadcasts but scepticism remained high for the same reasons. Mistrust of the news media was exacerbated by the muddles over censorship and the lack of information released by the three service departments. In controlling information released to the press, Churchill could make any claims about shipping losses he wished - as long as believable figures were given. There was no source of comparison available and so Churchill's reputation remained untarnished. Control of information also meant that Churchill could claim the adulation of the messenger, being praised when he gave good news and when he brought bad, he was lauded for his honesty.

Churchill's reputation for honesty was enhanced by the growing appreciation of his prophetic abilities. His warnings about the Nazi threat in the 1930s came to be vindicated by Hitler's actions, reminders of which the popular press never seemed to tire. The message was simple: if Churchill should have been trusted in the past, he could be trusted now. His activities in the latter half of the 1930s also meant that Churchill was excused the ignominy of the Munichers. Not only had he voiced the dissatisfaction felt by many people about appeasement, his backbench role meant that he could not be held responsible for the shortages of men and equipment that were being discovered in the early stages of the war. Churchill's opposition to appeasement also meant that his name

had not been entirely forgotten as the decade drew to a close. His articles and exposure through the Anti-Nazi Council raised his profile and informed the public sufficiently for people to pre-empt the press' demand for his return to the cabinet in the summer of 1939. But given the guardedness of the media in covering any anti-Chamberlain feeling, especially after Munich, the anti-appeasers could only have had limited publicity.

Hindsight, therefore, became an important factor in Churchill's reputation as it later developed, just as Churchill's image as First Lord provided the cornerstone of his image throughout 1940 and indeed the rest of the war. In spite of Churchill's rising stock at this period, it cannot be said that during the twilight war Churchill at once uplifted a dispirited nation. Nor could it be said that he could lay a single-handed claim to the microphone as he entered the premiership or that his prime-ministerial speeches of 1940 enhanced an already solid reputation. Rather, his opposition to appeasement promoted him as an alternative to Chamberlain whilst the Admiralty was a necessary adjunct to the status Churchill gained as Prime Minister. Alone, however, these roles would not have been sufficient grounds on which to build the outstanding position of eminence he eventually came to hold. Further aspects of his image had to be cultivated in order to entrench his prominence in the history of the country and these shall be examined in the next chapter.

Chapter 2

1940, The Myth and the Legend

Introduction

The Myth - or reality - of the British public's experience of the Second World War has gained an enormous amount of attention from historians since Angus Calder wrote *The People's War* in 1969 and which he later expanded upon in *The Myth of the Blitz*.¹ Hitherto, Richard Titmuss' image presided wherein British people were seen to pull together, endure the Blitz without bitterness or recrimination, and were generally deserved of the laudation that it was indeed the country's 'finest hour'.² Contemporary and subsequent authors subscribed to this view of British greatness only for it to be progressively dismantled by increasingly revisionist writers.³ Angus Calder, being the first of these, merely offered an alternative tour through the less creditable experiences and reactions to the war without necessarily detracting from the stoicism of the people. This was developed by subsequent generations of historians until Titmuss' cosy homogeneity had been fully inverted by the most extreme revisionists in the 1980s and 1990s.⁴ They seized on all the aspects of the war that demonstrated people's disinclination to subscribe to national solidarity, from industrial action⁵ to the incidence of crime.⁶ More recently, writing on the Myth has taken a more balanced view admitting that there were incidences of unfavourable behaviour just as much as there were many examples of exemplary behaviour,⁷ although in the final analysis people tend to revert to Titmuss' model that "on the whole the British were united and they did pull together".⁸

This view of unity and solidarity has never failed to hold popular currency; it at once affirmed the estimable qualities of the British race and helped the survivors of the

¹ Angus Calder, *The People's War*, (Pimlico, 1999 edition of the 1969 original). *Myth of the Blitz*, (Jonathan Cape, 1991).

² Richard Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, (HMSO, 1950).

³ For example, A.J.P. Taylor, *English History, 1914-1945*, (Penguin, 1965) and Arthur Marwick, *Britain in the Century of Total War*, (Penguin, 1970).

⁴ The most famous of such revisionists is surely Clive Ponting, *1940: Myth and Reality* (Hamish Hamilton, 1990). See also Harold L. Smith, (ed.) *War and Social Change*, (Manchester University Press, 1986) for a collection of revisionist essays.

⁵ Nick Tiratsoo and Jim Tomlinson, *Industrial Efficiency and State Intervention*, (Routledge, 1999), especially chapter 2.

⁶ E. Smithies, *Crime in Wartime*, (George Allen and Unwin, 1982).

⁷ For example, Malcolm Smith, *Britain and 1940*, (Routledge, 2000) and Robert Mackay, *Half the Battle*, (Manchester University Press, 2002).

⁸ Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War?* (Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 290.

conflict come to terms with the sacrifices that had been demanded of them and in this sense the Myth does, indeed, exist. It is a dialogue between national identity and a sense of historicity: the Second World War was the moment when Britain overcame all odds to carry on the fight until victory – decisive and incontrovertible – had been won. Besides it being a physical victory it was also a moral victory, both of democracy against totalitarianism, and of the chirpy Cockney defying the Nazi Jackboot. It is this sense of the Myth, with its ordinance of self-sacrifice and historicity, that the term is used here for although the image of Britons pulling together exists in perception it was not necessarily quite so pervasive as is supposed, hence the reference here to the ‘Myth’.

On the popular level, the Myth diverges from the academic version for whereas academics are apt to trace the existence or non-existence of the Myth from the start of the war in 1939 to its conclusion in 1945, the popular Myth condenses all of the war’s most significant events (in the eyes of the Home Front participants) into just one year: 1940. Evacuation, rationing, Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain, the Blitz, in fact all the experiences that demonstrated Britain’s greatness and triumph in adversity, as well as the courage and stoic endurance of the British people, happened - or are remembered to have happened - in this one year. Besides these moments of success, 1940 also saw Churchill’s accession to the premiership and therewith he was also admitted to the national Myth. It is not the intention here to pursue the academic debate on the veracity of the Myth, accepting simply that there was some embellishment on reality, but rather to assess how it intersected with the Legend of Winston Churchill.

Churchill is remembered as the epitome of Britishness during the war. His bullshness typified Britain’s tenacity and determination to see the war through to the end and, as the antithesis of the wearisome Chamberlain, the adoring British public showered him with gratitude and respect. His speeches of 1940 typified this fortitude and provided the war with its memorable rhetoric. “I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat”, “Though the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, ‘This was their finest hour’”, “We shall fight on the beaches”, “Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few” all date from the summer of 1940 and are remembered for the way in which they unified a nation in people’s admiration for him, and how he expressed their tenacious spirit. Churchill is also remembered affectionately for his concern for the people when he visited the Blitzed towns throughout the country. Holding his hat on the end of his walking stick, he would enter into music hall banter with the public, asking if they were

down-hearted and promising to bomb Germany back. His cheeky grin and his refusal to make the politer version of the V-sign testified to his boyish sense of humour. Together, these elements make up what has become the Churchill Legend.

This version of Churchill's reputation is firmly entrenched within historical tradition. Writing as early as 1941, Philip Guedalla, noted historian and erstwhile colleague of Churchill's in the Anti-Nazi Council, recorded Churchill's popularity in 1940, "his life had scarcely brought him popularity on a wide scale till now. But there could be no mistaking what they felt about him as the cheers rang out".⁹ At the end of the war, Lewis Broad took for granted Churchill's popularity and explained the centrality of Churchill's speeches to the emerging Myth: "When the services which Winston Churchill has rendered to the nation come to be evaluated, highest place will be found for the incomparable speeches in which he declared Britain's inflexible purpose...He was the very embodiment of the national spirit."¹⁰ Here the Myth and the Legend begin to merge.

The Churchill Legend became entrenched in the post-war period as Britain licked her wounds and tried to prevent all the glory of victory being stolen by America, and therewith Churchill became unassailable. Biographies of Churchill rolled off the presses in the 1940s and 1950s, all with the same worshipful attitude to Winston Churchill, "the saviour of the nation".¹¹ Towards the end of this period, with the emergent revisionism, Angus Calder noted that, "The mythical figure, 'Churchill in 1940', the embodiment of Britain and her past...has long since obliterated the reality of his position. The story of those summer days has been written from hindsight by the very people who were most under Churchill's spell".¹² However, the Legend of Churchill's standing amongst the public in 1940 has persisted. Calder continued, "In 1940, he had the nation behind him".¹³ Paul Addison wrote of how "At some point between May 1940 and the London Blitz of September, the career of Winston Churchill merged with the history of the British people and he was transformed into a popular hero."¹⁴ David Cannadine gives slightly different dates but still ascribes the emergence of Churchill's indomitable popularity to the second half of 1940.¹⁵

⁹ Philip Guedalla, *Mr. Churchill: A Portrait*, (Hodder and Staughton, 1941) p. 310.

¹⁰ Lewis Broad, *Winston Churchill*, (Hutchinson, 1945), p. 301.

¹¹ Taylor, *English History*, p. 29, n. 1.

¹² Calder, *People's War*, p. 93.

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 97.

¹⁴ Paul Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front*, (Pimlico, 1993) p 334.

¹⁵ David Cannadine, *In Churchill's Shadow*, (Allen Lane, 2002), p. 106.

This chapter challenges these assumptions about Churchill's representativeness of the people and his popularity in 1940. Public opinion is never monolithic on any given subject nor is it one-dimensional: conflicting and contradictory attitudes can exist simultaneously. So it was with Churchill in 1940.

The Premiership

On 10th May 1940, Churchill finally achieved his life-long ambition and became Prime Minister, but it was not an easy transition and met with stiff opposition in both the House of Commons and in Whitehall. John Colville, who became Churchill's Personal Private Secretary, was one such early detractor.¹⁶ It was some weeks before Churchill encountered a friendly reception in the House from his own party and then it was only under direction of the Chief Whip who feared that a show of disloyalty would give the wrong impression of Britain to the rest of the world.¹⁷ Amongst the public, acceptance of Churchill was a little more readily forthcoming, but it was by no means without reservation.

The invasion of France and the Low Countries came at an opportune moment for Churchill as the situation called for a 'man of action' which the media had already proved him to be. Publicly, Chamberlain came to shoulder the blame for the disastrous campaign in Norway and Churchill, although he had pushed for the operation, came away free of blame. Public optimism and confidence in the campaign had been high due to the rallying accounts in the media. At the end of April the public were told "how the Navy wiped up Norway" and how the BEF were making rapid and full progress in all reports of the campaign.¹⁸ Part of this was due to the German communiqués, freely published in the British press, which cleverly over-emphasised the Allied advance.¹⁹ It came as a shock, therefore, when withdrawals were suddenly announced on 1st May. Overnight people were forced to change their expectations from definite victory to virtually assured defeat. Angered, bewildered and betrayed, the public lost faith in the news media and hoped that "when they [had] the full story, the official version, they [would] be able to see things in a brighter light".²⁰ For this they turned to Chamberlain

¹⁶ John Wheeler-Bennett (Ed.) *Action This Day*, (Macmillan, 1961) p. 148.

¹⁷ For more on the political implications of Churchill's premiership see Chapter 5.

¹⁸ *News Chronicle* 24th April 1940.

¹⁹ Francis Williams, *Press, Parliament and People*, (Heinemann, 1946), pp. 47-8.

²⁰ Mass-Observation File Report (hereafter MO FR) 99, *Political Crisis Report*, April 1940.

who in the past had become “almost a magician in relieving people from the necessity of facing unpleasant reality situations” and they expected him to do the trick again.²¹ At the beginning of May, MO found a “comparative absence of any inclination to attach blame to the Government for incompetency (sic), half-heartedness or tardiness. Unpleasant things are happening in Norway but neither the Army, the Fleet, the Air Force nor the Government are responsible. It may be tentatively suggested that this tendency not to blame the Government is now widespread”.²²

This situation changed dramatically the following week when Chamberlain broadcast at 6pm. The public expected him to fill in the gaps that the news media had left and explain why the campaign had gone wrong, who was responsible and what the implications were for the future. Chamberlain, however, failed to address any of these issues and, according to MO, he fell from public favour within some fifteen minutes. By quarter-past six, there was an “unprecedented stream of emotional material”, and comments were so strong that they “[came] up to the standard of public comment about Hitler”.²³ By 10th May there was “tremendous antagonism about the Government especially centred on the Prime Minister, and especially due to the belief that we were continuously acting too slowly, that he was too old, etc.”.²⁴

Dissatisfaction with Chamberlain as Prime Minister had long been high, and those satisfied had been in decline since the previous November. The first few months of war saw a jump in those happy with his leadership from 55 per cent to 68 per cent, but this was due more to a sense of patriotic duty not to criticise members of the Government at a time of national crisis than a real rise in Chamberlain’s popularity.²⁵ Even by 7th May, people still felt it “necessary to apologise if they [made] any remarks against the Government or Prime Minister”.²⁶ Privately, however, opinion was less obliging. Since Munich, MO had found a steady decrease in the amount of applause accompanying Chamberlain’s appearances in newsreels and overheard comments increased in their antagonism.²⁷ These were mainly directed against the lack of action in the war and what was perceived to be weak leadership. These criticisms continued with vehemence through the summer.²⁸ As has already been seen, the majority of the public

²¹ Ibid.

²² MO FR 95, *the Norway Crisis*, 3rd May 1940.

²³ MO FR 99, *Political Crisis Report*, April 1940.

²⁴ MO FR 101, *First Day of the Holland-Belgium Crisis*, 11th May 1940.

²⁵ See Appendix 4, Table 9.

²⁶ MO FR 99, *Political Crisis Report*, April 1940.

²⁷ MO FR 444, *Newsreel Report*, 27th October 1940.

²⁸ This will be examined below and in Chapter 3.

wanted the war to begin in earnest so that it might be ended sooner. Thus, when criticism of Chamberlain was given social sanction by the media openly questioning his leadership, public opinion against him exploded. Into this void came Winston Churchill.

The political movements which propelled Churchill into the premiership have been well-documented elsewhere but, to be brief, there was no-one else under whom the Labour and Liberal parties would agree to serve and who was prepared to assume the heavy mantle of leading a country at war.²⁹ Halifax refused the job and the only other contender, insofar as those at Westminster were concerned, was Churchill himself.

The press similarly advocated either of the two main candidates, Churchill or Halifax, for the premiership with the *Daily Mail* ruminating on the suitability of Lloyd George. None was more vocal in its support of Churchill than the *Daily Express* which pointed out, "At this stage in the war Mr. Churchill is probably more suited for the direction of the national effort than Mr. Chamberlain. He possesses gifts which are better turned to the hour", gifts that is of determination and drive.³⁰

The public, however, added a further figure to the list of candidates, Anthony Eden. Eden had long been a popular figure and caused widespread consternation on his resignation as Foreign Secretary in 1938. As early as November that year, some 40 per cent of people favoured a new Government under Eden and by March 1939 he was first choice amongst Conservatives to replace Chamberlain, polling 38 per cent to Churchill's 7.³¹ Churchill gained much ground in the ensuing year but still came second – albeit a close second – to Eden in a poll regarding who should replace Chamberlain in March 1940.³² MO found a similar popularity for Eden, particularly among women, the day before Churchill became Prime Minister.³³ Some sections of the public, in contrast with Westminster and the press, also still had a place for Chamberlain. When given the choice between the two for Prime Minister in December 1939, half of those interviewed opted for Chamberlain (52 per cent) and a third for Churchill (30 per cent).³⁴ It may be that social sanction affected this result in that it was unpatriotic to reject Chamberlain, but it does not explain Eden's earlier unprecedented popularity. It also suggests that Churchill did not enjoy unconditional popularity upon becoming Prime Minister. There was

²⁹ For further details on Churchill's rise to power see Robert Blake "How Churchill Became Prime Minister" in Robert Blake and William Louis, *Churchill*, (Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 253-275. For a fuller account of the party political difficulties, see Graham Stewart, *Burying Caesar*, (Phoenix, 1999) chapter 14.

³⁰ *Daily Express* 10th May 1940.

³¹ See Appendix 4, Tables 10 and 11.

³² See Appendix 4, Table 12.

³³ MO FR 99 *The Political Crisis*, April 1940.

³⁴ See Appendix 4, Table 13.

certainly an element of opinion that Churchill was the right man for the job through his reputation as the man of action, but as MO concluded, “Mr Churchill’s own prestige has certainly not been increased by the general achievement inference of Norway...Public opinion is rallying behind Churchill, but there is still a good deal of suspicion about him”.³⁵ Some of these suspicions dated back to his earlier career when people remembered, however mistakenly, the siege in Sidney Street, his actions during the General Strike, and sending in the troops to Tonypandy in 1910, and were especially prevalent amongst the Left.³⁶ But more immediate were concerns about the implications of his belligerence and man of action image, as MO recorded one woman saying: “I think it’s grand for the country [to have Churchill as Prime Minister] but hard for the individual. Churchill will slaughter the lot of us but win the war”.³⁷

Such doubts were not echoed in the press which gave surprisingly little coverage of the change of Prime Minister at such a critical stage in the country’s history and for a figure as supposedly popular as Churchill. His accession was barely mentioned in the newsreels, and although it made the front pages in all of the newspapers, it took second, third, and even fourth place to the news from the Continent and took the form of indicating his “wartime calibre”³⁸ and his “splendid qualities as a man of action”.³⁹ Such images of Churchill had clearly been fostered whilst he was at the Admiralty. Press coverage also stressed how Churchill was now “head of a united nation” and *Picture Post* also wrote of how Britain was now “united for victory”.⁴⁰ Perhaps the best expression of this celebration of unity was Low’s now famous cartoon depicting the new members of the Government rolling up their sleeves and getting into step behind Churchill with the caption, “All behind you, Winston” (Figure 6). This was a comment on the new spirit of determination he imbued in the country as well as the unifying powers he possessed. But just in case the public missed the importance of this latter quality in the wider war effort, they were reminded that “it is the duty of the nation to rally round him” and give him their united support.⁴¹ If Churchill had been as popular as the Legend suggests such support would have been taken for granted.

³⁵ MO FR 103 *Second Report on the Holland-Belgium Crisis*, 13th May 1940.

³⁶ See Chapter 5 for more on people’s reservations about Churchill.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ *News Chronicle* 11th May 1940.

³⁹ *Daily Mail* 11th May 1940.

⁴⁰ *News of the World* 12th May 1940 and *Picture Post* 25th May 1940.

⁴¹ *Daily Mirror* 11th May 1940.

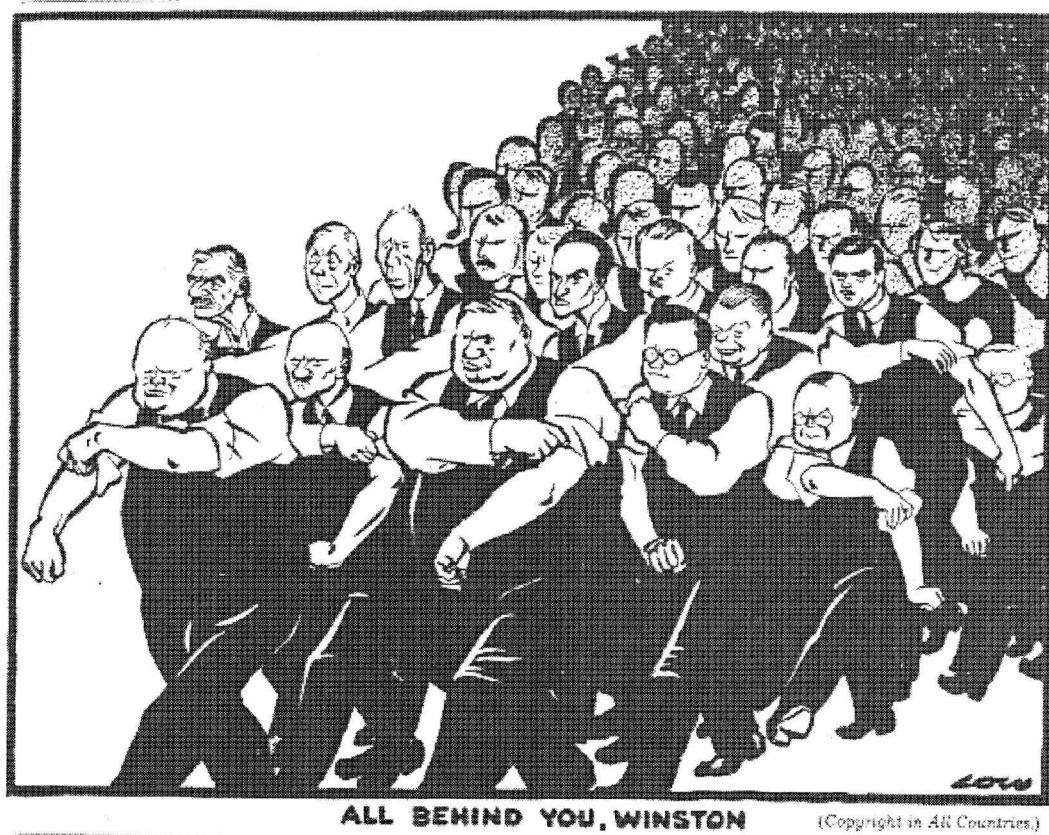


Figure 6 *Evening Standard*, 24th May 1940

Churchill's man of action image set him apart from the other members of the Government to the same extent that it had whilst at the Admiralty. His choice of members of the War Cabinet was largely praised,⁴² however, there was some consternation that Chamberlain should be given such a high position in the Government as Lord President of the Council. After initial criticism in May and June, opinion began to turn strongly against Chamberlain in July. MO found that 62 per cent of people wanted him removed right away while just 18 per cent thought he should stay in the Cabinet.⁴³ His broadcast on 30th June did not initially "bring to the fore any strong anti-Chamberlain feeling" but by the next day even "Conservative and business elements" were in favour of his resignation, and by 3rd July HI found "a strong movement

⁴² *Daily Express* 14th May 1940. Churchill, according to John Colville, was only interested in filling the more important posts and his attention drifted so that the filling of the minor posts was left to Brendan Bracken and Beaverbrook. Harold Nicolson (edited by Nigel Nicholson) *Harold Nicolson Diaries and Letters, 1939-1945*, (Collins, 1967) 13th May 1940, p. 85. Hereafter Nicolson diary.

⁴³ These figures echo the proportions in favour of Chamberlain during the late 1930s. MO FR 438 *Article for World Review*, October 1940.

developing against the ‘Men of Munich’”.⁴⁴ The publication of *Guilty Men* undoubtedly did much to fan this rise in opposition to the Municheers and it sold 50,000 copies in the first month.⁴⁵ Not everyone took kindly to its criticisms of the Chamberlain Government and an increasing number of outlets refused to stock the book. In order to overcome this and to meet popular demand, by August it was being sold like newspapers by vendors in the streets.⁴⁶ Such feeling against Chamberlain did not fade, rather it increased in its intensity and by the time of his resignation on 3rd October MO found that the proportion of those opposed to Chamberlain had risen from 3:1 to 5:1.⁴⁷ “Anti-Chamberlainism has been one of the most consistent and persistent elements of public opinion since the beginning of May” it claimed.⁴⁸ Such feeling against the appeasers clearly did much to enhance Churchill’s standing. The *Daily Mirror*, which was the only one of the main daily newspapers to have consistently opposed appeasement, was particularly vocal in reminding people that Churchill “was the man who told you” about the Nazi threat and most forcibly promoted the removal of the Men of Munich from the Government.⁴⁹ The others refrained from criticism of that particular group but condemnation of the inefficient members of the Government was widespread, although once again the *Daily Mirror* was the most voluble.⁵⁰

The *Mirror* ran a daily column entitled ‘Muddle’ which exposed a catalogue of Governmental ineptitude. This was placed in a prominent position on the front page from June 1940 until it was no longer newsworthy when it was relegated to the second page and eventually discreetly dropped. In the ‘muddle’ columns, Churchill was always defended from the criticisms of the Government and the distinction between him and the other Cabinet members was underlined. Churchill’s “qualities are apparent and his abilities are unquestioned”, wrote the *Daily Mirror* over the Dakar incident for example, “but that does not mean that his colleagues share them”.⁵¹ The main criticisms were a lack of vigour, energy and a sense of urgency, all of which Churchill was seen to embody so well.

⁴⁴ HI Daily Reports 1st, 2nd, 3rd July 1940, INF1/264, Public Record Office.

⁴⁵ *Daily Mirror* 8th August 1940. ‘Cato’, *Guilty Men*, (Victor Gollancz, 1940). The short book was written by a triumvirate of left-wing Beaverbrook journalists and established the culpability of the Municheers for the setbacks experienced by Britain in the first years of the war.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ MO FR 125, *Article for World Review*, October 1940.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ *Daily Mirror* 21st May 1940.

⁵⁰ The reasons why the press was hesitant to criticise the Municheers is examined in Chapter 3.

⁵¹ *Daily Mirror* 9th October 1940.

Churchill's accession to the premiership did not, contrary to the Legend, bring automatic recognition from the people. Primarily, people were relieved that Chamberlain had gone and "acceptance of Mr. Churchill as Prime Minister allowed people to believe that a change of leadership would, in itself, solve the consequences of Mr. Chamberlain".⁵² Suspicions of his actions in the past from the Labour camp were not the only doubts in the public's mind, but also that for which he has since become so famous: his belligerence and readiness to fight. While people were weary of the Nazi threat and were prepared to do something about it, they realised that it would be they who bore the brunt of any military action and so were naturally cautious of such a commitment. The newspapers, by contrast, loved Churchill's belligerent image; it was the perfect vision of a nation at war and it was only a small step to Churchill becoming the perfect icon. It was this which helped to make the Legend.

The Speeches

Despite the mixed feelings about Churchill's ascendancy to the premiership, his first broadcast as Prime Minister on 19th May had been eagerly awaited by the public, for there had been a delay of over a week between Churchill becoming Prime Minister and making his first broadcast.⁵³ Public comment was "all favourable" particularly because people felt "he was not hiding things".⁵⁴ The speech outlined the threat that was facing Britain without attempting to mollify the situation as Chamberlain had done. Instead, Churchill recognised that it would be "foolish...to disguise the gravity of the hour", and into a few minutes he condensed the previously disbelieved reports of troop movements, battlefronts, and the might of the German Army.⁵⁵ He went on to urge that the people of the Empire "wage war until victory is won and never to surrender ourselves to servitude and shame, whatever the cost and agony may be" which echoed the now famous "victory at all costs" phrase delivered in the House of Commons a few days

⁵² HI Daily Report, 18th-19th May 1940, INF1/264.

⁵³ The delay between becoming Prime Minister and making the broadcast had been due to Churchill himself: he saw no need to communicate with his people but eventually conceded to Chamberlain's suggestion to broadcast. There is no record of reactions to his first speech as Prime Minister on 13th May which gave the phrase "blood, toil, tears and sweat" as it came five days before HI was fully established and neither MO nor the BBC conducted a survey. See Appendix 2 for the text of the speech.

⁵⁴ HI Daily Reports 19th and 20th May 1940, INF1/264.

⁵⁵ "Be Ye Men of Valour", broadcast, 19th May 1940, Churchill (edited by Randolph Churchill) *Into Battle* (Cassell, 1940) pp. 209-212. See Appendix 2 for the full text.

before.⁵⁶ Such a “good fighting speech”, which made people feel that they were “taken into his confidence”, was a stark contrast to the secrecy that surrounded the Chamberlain administration’s treatment of the Norway campaign.⁵⁷ The immediate effect of the speech was not, however, so dramatic: there did not seem to be “any general realisation that the Prime Minister’s speech had any extremely grave import”; rather it took a short time for people to assimilate the implications of the broadcast.⁵⁸ A few days afterwards HI noted that “complacency had been disturbed” (which was seen to be no bad thing), that some people had been stirred by the speech and had “come to face the facts”.⁵⁹ But in addition to these effects it also caused “bewilderment and distress...more...severe than ever before”.⁶⁰ MO concurred with this view, finding that, “Superficially, people *liked* his speech. But under the surface, he really worried people and gave a great many perhaps their biggest shock yet”.⁶¹ In a house-to-house survey in London, half of the people interviewed in 150 households were found to be “heartened” by the speech, but the other half were “frightened”.⁶²

Shortly after this, the situation looked increasingly bleak for Britain. The King of Belgium suddenly capitulated exposing the Anglo-French flank along the border and resulted in a hasty retreat to Dunkirk. The initial coverage by the press rebuked King Leopold for his unilateral action and recounted the exhaustion of the troops upon their repatriation. The troops themselves knew only their failure to halt the Blitzkrieg, but on encountering the cheering British public they soon shed their ignominy and proudly began chalking ‘BEF’ on their helmets in acceptance of the ‘miracle’.⁶³ J.B. Priestley’s broadcast also helped to entrench the myth with his speech about the ‘little ships’, giving the whole exercise an almost holiday atmosphere whilst the *Daily Mirror* famously thought it was simply “Bloody marvellous”.⁶⁴ Churchill, however, did not share this exhilaration. Whilst he praised the Royal and Merchant Navies and the RAF in his speech in the House of Commons on 4th June, he reminded the country “not to assign to

⁵⁶ “Blood, tears, toil and sweat”, House of Commons, 13th May 1940, *Into Battle* pp. 207-8.

⁵⁷ HI Daily Reports 19th and 20th May 1940, INF1/264.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ HI Daily Report 21st May 1940, INF1/264.

⁶⁰ MO FR 131, *Morale Today*, 23rd May 1940.

⁶¹ MO Report, *Churchill’s Broadcast*, 19th May 1940, MO Archive, University of Sussex, Topic Collection (TC) 25/6/1.

⁶² MO FR 131 *Morale Today*, 23rd May 1940.

⁶³ Peter Hadley, *Third Class to Dunkirk*, (Hollins and Carter, 1944), pp. 142-44.

⁶⁴ *Daily Mirror* 1st June 1940.

this deliverance the attributes of victory; wars are not won by retreats.”⁶⁵ He went on to call the situation in Belgium and France “a colossal military disaster” and warned:

we must expect another blow to be struck almost immediately at us or at France. We are told, Sir, that Herr Hitler has a plan for invading the British Isles...I have full confidence...we should prove ourselves able to defend our island home, to ride out the storm of war and to outlive the menace of tyranny if necessary for years. If necessary alone.⁶⁶

Then followed Churchill’s famous aphorism of defiance: “We shall fight on the beaches. We shall fight on the landing grounds...We shall never surrender”.

The public were rather more shaken by this speech than the press and HI felt that Churchill’s “grave tone...may have contributed in some measure to the rather pessimistic atmosphere” of the following day and that “some apprehension [had] been caused throughout the country on account of the Prime Minister’s reference to ‘fighting alone’ ”.⁶⁷ Although the establishment view generally concurred with Churchill’s public defiance – as shown in the King’s notorious elation after the Fall of France and the famous Low cartoon (Figure 7) – the public were deeply concerned at the imminent loss of Britain’s main ally.⁶⁸ This apprehension contrasts sharply with the image of the public within the Myth which would hold that people remained staunch and defiant in Britain’s darkest hour, suggesting that Churchill’s speeches themselves and the press reports of them were influential factors in affecting popular memory and developing the image of Britain at war.

In spite of the attention that the speech later attracted, only the *Daily Mirror* and the *Daily Worker* gave it value as a main headline, and even then gave precedence to the phrase, “We Never Surrender”, whilst the *News Chronicle* rather more prosaically emphasised that the “BEF must be rebuilt”.⁶⁹ Once again, the speech confirmed Churchill’s role as the honest imparter of information and “he spared us nothing of

⁶⁵ “Dunkirk”, House of Commons, 4th June 1940, Churchill, *Into Battle*, pp. 215-223.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ HI Daily Report 5th June 1940, INF1/264.

⁶⁸ Churchill too privately shared this view. When General Ismay said that he was glad to be fighting alone and that, “ ‘we will win the Battle of Britain’ Churchill gave him a look and remarked, ‘You and I will be dead in three months’ time’ ”. Ismay, quoted in David Reynolds, “Churchill and the Decision to Fight On in 1940” in Richard Langhorne, *Diplomacy and Intelligence During World War Two*, (Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 154.

⁶⁹ Headline in *Daily Mirror* 5th June 1940. *Daily Worker* and headline in *News Chronicle* 5th June 1940.



Figure 7 *Evening Standard*, 18th June 1940

disagreeable fact”.⁷⁰ Indeed, such praise for Churchill’s openness had been increasing in the press since his accession to the premiership and found expression in a cartoon the following day which showed him cleaning the glasses of the public after they had misted up with the rosy prognostications put about by the Chamberlain administration (Figure 8). While the press was busy praising the contents of the speech, the immortal line, “We



Figure 8 *Daily Herald*, 6th June 1940

⁷⁰ *Daily Mail* 5th June 1940.

shall fight on the beaches” was largely overlooked. It was marginally highlighted only in the *News Chronicle* while the *Daily Herald* even wrote that it contained “no soothing catchphrase”.⁷¹ The speech is ‘remembered’ by thousands for being delivered by Churchill with his halting and characteristic intonation and conjures up the image of people huddled around their radio sets listening to his stentorian tones. However, the speech was given by Churchill in the House of Commons and was heard only by MPs and people in the public gallery; it was not recorded by Churchill until after the war and was certainly not broadcast by him at the time.⁷² Vita Sackville-West, wife of Harold Nicolson, confirmed this when she wrote how, “Even repeated by the announcer it sent shivers (not of fear) down my spine”.⁷³ This shows how entrenched the Legend of Churchill’s intonation and rhetoric has become and how easily false memories can be created. His famous phrase was not necessarily recognised by the press or indeed the public at the time. What proved more salient and what was emphasised by the media was his commitment to preserve the honour of the country and to fight until victory was won.

A further typically Churchillian oration followed two weeks later with his “Finest Hour” speech.⁷⁴ Instead of proclaiming defiant victory, here he assessed the probability of invasion and the efficacy of British forces to repel it. Of course, these were not found to be wanting but the grave tone that was evident in the Dunkirk speech was also to be found here. It followed shortly after the Fall of France and with it came the harsh realisation that Britain was now alone in Europe. Nevertheless, the speech was “generally deemed satisfactory”, was “welcomed for its frankness”, and for “giving the sort of facts and figures” the people wanted.⁷⁵ However, Churchill’s delivery was widely criticised.

Earlier on the day of the broadcast, Churchill had performed the speech to a packed House of Commons. Harold Nicolson thought that his performance had been “magnificent”, so much so that Churchill was “bullied” into repeating it for the radio. Churchill was, however, extremely reluctant to do so and rather than imbuing the speech

⁷¹ *News Chronicle* and *Daily Herald* 5th June 1940.

⁷² David Irving’s and Christopher Hitchens’ claims that the speech was recorded and broadcast by Norman Shelley at this time have been refuted by numerous scholars. See, for example, the appendix to D.J. Wenden, “Churchill, Radio, and Cinema” in Blake and Louis, *Churchill*, pp. 215–240.

⁷³ Vita Sackville-West to Harold Nicolson, 5th June 1940, Nicolson diary, p. 93.

⁷⁴ “Their Finest Hour”, House of Commons and broadcast, 18th June 1940, Churchill, *Into Battle*, pp. 225–243. See Appendix 2 for the text of the speech.

⁷⁵ HI Daily Report 19th June 1940, INF1/264. MO FR 207 *Morale Today* 19th June 1940.

with his characteristic vigour, he “sounded ghastly on the wireless”.⁷⁶ “It would seem”, wrote MO, “that the delivery to some extent counteracted the contents of the speech”.⁷⁷ In any other circumstances and perhaps for any other politician it could have been simply dismissed as an ‘off-day’, but it is surprising to find such criticism at the height of the crisis of the summer of 1940 and the supposed apogee of the Churchill Legend. Surprising, too, that once again the legendary phrase ‘Their Finest Hour’ should not be widely taken up in the press. Indeed, the *Daily Mirror* used the occasion to level a demand rather than lavish praise. “Leadership, give us leadership”, it exacted in its editorial column, as it was felt to be lacking throughout the Government. The MoI was slightly more astute, and on the same day Churchill gave the speech proposed that a poster be made of its closing sentence.⁷⁸ However, the idea was dropped the next day as being “impracticable”.⁷⁹ Hannen Swaffer also picked up on the phrase in his column in the *Daily Herald*, but again, rather than the emphasis lying with Churchill’s fine rhetoric, Swaffer cynically highlighted Churchill’s appalling delivery.⁸⁰ Churchill’s delivery of the broadcast may not have been so important in itself, but it did signify a surprising contrast to his supposed apotheosis. People thought he was tired or else had lost his self-confidence, but perhaps the most damaging of all was the charge that he was drunk when making such an important broadcast, lending weight to the German propaganda claims.⁸¹ This disappointment in his speech was compounded with his failure to deliver a swift victory.

Churchill’s accession to the premiership had raised hopes that the inefficiency and hesitation which had been characteristic of the Chamberlain administration might be undone and Churchill’s image as the man of action made him just the person for the job. It was hoped that he might lead where Chamberlain had feared, but the offensive for which everyone had hoped failed to materialise and the following month saw the domino-like collapse of much of Western Europe and the retreat of the British Army. MO had earlier warned shortly after Churchill’s first prime ministerial broadcast that “there appears to be a good deal of potential criticism of leadership in general, which is likely to increase if Churchill cannot provide some immediate achievement to contrast his

⁷⁶ Nicolson diary, 19th June 1940, p. 97.

⁷⁷ MO FR 207, *Morale Today* 19th June 1940.

⁷⁸ “If the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, ‘This was their finest hour.’ ”

⁷⁹ MoI’s Home Publicity Planning Committee Minutes, 18th and 19th June 1940, INF1/249.

⁸⁰ *Daily Herald* 19th June 1940. To hear the broadcast from June 1940 rather than the endlessly repeated and ameliorated post-war version visit www.earthstation1.com/wcwwii.html.

⁸¹ Mass-Observation File Reports 202, *Morale Today* 17th June and 242, *Morale Today* 1st – 2nd July 1940.

activities with Chamberlain's".⁸² For all his fighting talk, Churchill was unable to demonstrate any decisive – and successful – military action. By the end of June, Churchill himself was in danger of 'missing the bus'. The momentum that had been gained by his new premiership had "heavily declined" and time was "growing limited for the successful mobilisation of the public under strong leadership".⁸³ Robert Boothby, noted that the "mood of the country is rapidly becoming revolutionary in a militant sense"⁸⁴ and MO warned of:

the conflict between the desire to have leadership one can believe in utterly and a feeling that leadership can no longer be trusted – a feeling now dramatically re-emphasised by the violent press and radio attacks on the French Government, the bickering between Petien (sic) and Churchill, the great emphasis laid on the fact that the French Government have let people down and that people can do nothing about it.⁸⁵

There was a need, MO maintained, for propaganda to counteract "the hopelessness, bewilderment, and frustration, the feeling that nothing [could] be done" in order to avert "chaos, panic, and widespread defeatism and the feeling that it [made] no difference who [was] in charge".⁸⁶

There followed strong pro-Churchillian coverage in the press and even the *Daily Herald*, staunchly Labour and hitherto cautious of Churchill, dropped its guard. Coverage of Churchill's speech in which he announced the destruction of the French Fleet emphasised the tumultuous applause he received in the House and underlined his popularity in Parliament.⁸⁷ The *News of the World* had earlier written of his "inspiring leadership" and now noted how this was "the Premier's finest hour".⁸⁸ The *Daily Express* evangelistically announced, "the hour has found the man...A great leader is among us when we need him most".⁸⁹ Almost all newspapers commented on his place in history. Such singular praise made it difficult for the ordinary member of the public to express any alternative view as did the Silent Column campaign and the new laws introduced

⁸² MO Report, *Churchill's Broadcast*, 19th May 1940, TC/25/6/1.

⁸³ MO FR 202, *Morale Today* 17th June. HI Daily Report 21st June 1940, INF1/264.

⁸⁴ Boothby to Churchill, 19th June 1940, CHAR 20/1. Boothby was Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of Food and an erstwhile colleague of Churchill's in the criticisms of appeasement.

⁸⁵ MO FR 222, *General Points in Morale* 22nd June 1940.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ "The Tragedy of the French Fleet", House of Commons, 4th July 1940, Churchill, *Into Battle*, pp. 239-246.

⁸⁸ *News of the World* 28th June 1940 and 7th July 1940. This was one of the first examples of the phrase being used outside the context of the original speech showing how this particular phrase was taken up. See Chapter 3 for a further exploration of how it came into common usage.

⁸⁹ *Daily Express* 5th July 1940.

under the Defence Notices. These were aimed at protecting the interests of the country and legislated against the obvious examples of spying and passing on information which may be of use to the enemy. But they also precluded any public criticism of Churchill: one woman was arraigned for trying to cause disaffection by saying of one of Churchill's broadcasts, "What utter tripe!"⁹⁰

Public feeling, however, was more united after Churchill's next broadcast on 14th July.⁹¹ "Reports from all regions agree that the Premier's speech last night won universal approval...Reading RIO [Regional Information Officer] reports more spontaneous messages of commendation than for any other important speech".⁹² The people of Brighton proclaimed that it was "the kind of thing we want", whilst Londoners seemed to be "more cheerful and confident in consequence".⁹³ The broadcast was still being spoken of with enthusiasm almost a week later, longer than for any other speech during the war. It was much less beseeching than his earlier utterances and less cluttered by fine rhetoric. A substantial part of the speech was given over to praise for the Army, Local Defence Volunteers (renamed here the Home Guard), and civilians, in addition to the customary references to the work of the RAF and Navy. He outlined Britain's strong defensive position although warned against "any slackening of effort or vigilance", urging people rather to redouble their efforts in order to secure resources for some years into the future. The public found his assurances that war would be fought until the end "welcome and heartening" and faith was instilled that "we shall not be sold out as the French were by their Government".⁹⁴ Thus, in this one broadcast, Churchill heeded all of the warnings made by MO in June about the need to instil confidence in the country's leadership and assuaged many of the public's fears. It is interesting to note that despite this speech being so hugely popular in 1940, it has largely been forgotten by the Legend and has passed into relative obscurity perhaps on account of it being tailored more towards the immediate needs of the people rather than lasting historical sentiments.

The success of the 'Unknown Warriors' broadcast was followed a month later by a speech which contained what is now perhaps Churchill's most famous aphorism, often paraphrased even in foreign languages today. 'The Many and the Few' speech came

⁹⁰ *Daily Herald* 19th July 1940. Despite an extensive search, further details of this case could not be found. By the end of July and after much criticism, the Silent Column campaign was withdrawn and even though Churchill had instigated the campaign against the wishes of the Mol, he popularly announced a review of the sentences imposed as a result of its operation.

⁹¹ "War of the Unknown Warriors", broadcast, 14th July 1940, Churchill, *Into Battle*, pp. 247-251. See Appendix 2 for the text of the speech.

⁹² HI Daily Report 15th July 1940, INF1/264.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ HI Daily Report 16th July 1940, INF1/264.

shortly after the climax of the Battle of Britain and describes once again Britain's extensive resources with which war could be waged and victory won.⁹⁵ The fighter pilots, to whom so much was owed, had stalled the German invasion of Britain, while the bomber pilots were able to carry on Britain's offensive action against the German homeland. It was considered by the public to be "compelty (sic) right" and to be "the most forceful and heartening he has yet made".⁹⁶ The press was equally effusive in its praise, the *Daily Mirror* calling it a "brave piece of eloquence" and the *News Chronicle* recommended everyone read it.⁹⁷ Once again, however, the now-famous phrase did not have any immediate impact. John Colville had seen a draft of the speech and remembers that the phrase "did not strike [him] very forcibly at the time".⁹⁸ He records that Mary Churchill paraphrased it a month later, adding the footnote, "variations on this theme had not become as fashionable as they did subsequently".⁹⁹ In reporting the speech the next day, some of the press gave it some prominence by using it as a subheading between sections of the verbatim text, although the *Daily Express* thought of more importance was his closing sentence about the nature of the Anglo-American relationship when he said, "Like the Mississippi, it just keeps rolling along. Let it roll. Let it roll on full flood, inexorable, irresistible, benignant, to broader lands and better days."¹⁰⁰ Hugh Martin, in his anthology of short Churchillian quotations published in October 1940, also included the same part of the speech whilst omitting 'the Few'.¹⁰¹ But by far the most important topic contained within the speech, in the press' opinion, was his allusion to a further offensive. Amongst the public this was "widely welcomed" as it reiterated his commitment to fight rather than to capitulate.¹⁰² This was obviously a significant factor in determining the popularity of the speech as it promised the military activity Churchill's premiership was supposed to usher in but a large part was also a result of Churchill's optimism. Perhaps it was because the immediate dangers of invasion had passed and the Battle of Britain virtually won that Churchill dared venture a little optimistic conjecture.

⁹⁵ "The War Situation", House of Commons, 20th August 1940, Churchill, *Into Battle*, pp. 252-62. See Appendix 2 for the text of the speech.

⁹⁶ HI Daily Report 21st August 1940, INF1/264.

⁹⁷ *Daily Mirror* and *News Chronicle* 21st August 1940.

⁹⁸ John Colville, *Fringes of Power*, (Hodder and Staughton 1985), footnote to entry 20th August 1940, p. 227. Hereafter Colville diary.

⁹⁹ Colville diary, footnote to entry 22nd September 1940, p. 248.

¹⁰⁰ Churchill, too, seemed most struck by this phrase, and after giving the speech in the House of Commons, got into his car "and he sang 'Ole Man River' (out of tune) the whole way back to Downing Street". Colville diary, 20th August 1940, p. 227.

¹⁰¹ Hugh Martin, *Battle*, (Victor Gollancz, 1940).

¹⁰² HI Daily Report 23rd August 1940, INF1/264.

When in the broadcast of 14th July Churchill had made mention of the war continuing for another two or three years, in the 'Many and the Few' speech he suggested that it may be somewhat shorter. At the time of the broadcast, Churchill was negotiating a deal with Roosevelt for fifty warships in exchange for American use of British naval ports, thereby giving the illusion of greatly strengthening the Navy.¹⁰³ This was taken to mean that victory was inevitable. Such optimism on Churchill's part engendered a "strong feeling of confidence...that come what will we are top dogs" and the previous week had shown that "we shall win no matter what slight doubts there [had been]".¹⁰⁴ However, within a few days this increased confidence caused HI to worry that the speech may have been taken too lightly by some people: "There is some danger", the Southern RIO noted, "that people may mistake the Premier's optimism in ultimate victory for a feeling that it is already in sight".¹⁰⁵ This delicate balance between confidence and over-optimism was under constant threat throughout the war.

It is perhaps on account of this over-confidence that Churchill's next broadcast on 11th September dwelt on the continued threat of German invasion and the preparations that were being made on the continent.¹⁰⁶ "Every man and woman will therefore prepare himself to do his duty...with special pride and care", he exhorted, paraphrasing Nelson. The speech was "well-received" but there was evidence that "many people, having convinced themselves that the invasion [was] 'off', disliked being reminded of it again".¹⁰⁷ While being admired for its "plain speaking", there appeared to be less enthusiasm for the speech than usual.¹⁰⁸ The same was true of the media. In the press the speech was quoted at length, but there was little comment. Rather than showing that people were inured to Churchillian rhetoric by this date, it showed that acceptance of Churchill was still not guaranteed even four months into his premiership and that people did not automatically hang on to his every word; when he delivered exactly what people wanted to hear his popularity rose, as in July with the 'Unknown Warriors' broadcast, but once he delivered a more realistic message, as on this occasion or on the 4th June, people received it less ardently. Although they did respect his honesty and willingness to impart bad news, obviously good news and optimistic prognostications had a greater appeal.

¹⁰³ That the ships were old and virtually operationally obsolete was overlooked in the press reports.

¹⁰⁴ HI Daily Report 21st August 1940, INF1/264.

¹⁰⁵ HI Daily Report 22nd August 1940, INF1/264.

¹⁰⁶ "Every Man to his Post", broadcast, 11th September 1940, Churchill, *Into Battle*, pp. 272-75.

¹⁰⁷ HI Daily Report 12th September 1940, INF1/264.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

The importance of good news was revealed in late September when the British and Free French launched an attack on Dakar in Senegal. The attack aimed to prevent the naval base falling to Vichy France but it proved to be yet another failure in Britain's now long and lamentable catalogue, and as a result Churchill's popularity was "a little reduced".¹⁰⁹ There had been some criticism in the press of the campaign to which Churchill proved extremely sensitive. In his speech of 8th October, he rebuked those newspapers which had been disapproving, calling them so "vicious and malignant that it would be almost indecent if applied to the enemy".¹¹⁰ "The newspaper reading public will surely be puzzled by the vehemence of this attack" wrote the *Daily Herald* in response, and this condemnation of the press contributed to the decrease in his popularity as it confirmed people's suspicions of his dictatorial tendencies.¹¹¹

After the Dakar incident had died down, the postal censor noted one tenth as much comment on Churchill as was usual, although all comment, with one exception, was favourable. "In June", the censor explained, "people seemed to feel that only Churchill stood between them and disaster, now the ordinary people of England have shown that they too could play just as stubborn and important a part", revealing an early development of the Myth as encouraged by Churchill's own speeches.¹¹² Nevertheless, the public still seemed to be expecting a quick end to the war. When it emerged that Churchill revised his opinion about the duration of the war and did not anticipate victory until 1943-44 the public were heartily discouraged.¹¹³ The public's faith in his optimism took a further blow when both he and Air Chief Marshall Joubert were found to have given false hopes concerning Britain's air defence system.¹¹⁴ Thus, the pattern between military success, the management of expectation and Churchill's personal popularity began to emerge.

It is significant that this decline in Churchill's popularity emerged as soon as he ceased broadcasting quite as regularly to the British people. Through the summer, he had made one broadcast per month but after the broadcast in September, he made none until the following February, which became famous for the phrase "Give us the tools and we will finish the job" and which gained the largest audience ever recorded since

¹⁰⁹ HI Weekly Report 14th-21st October 1940, INF1/292.

¹¹⁰ "The War Situation", House of Commons, 8th October 1940, *Into Battle* pp. 279-291.

¹¹¹ *Daily Herald* 9th October 1940.

¹¹² HI Weekly Report 14th-21st October 1940, INF1/292.

¹¹³ HI Weekly Report 11th-18th November 1940, INF1/292.

¹¹⁴ HI Weekly Report 18th-25th November 1940, INF1/292.

monitoring began in December 1939.¹¹⁵ From then on the frequency with which he spoke to the British nation declined sharply, so that in 1942 he only made three dedicated broadcasts and in 1944 just one. This mirrored his declining public profile as he became increasingly immersed in his military and diplomatic war work and had little time to spare for the public. However, people still had direct access to Churchill's broadcasts, both in spoken form on records produced by HMV and in written form in pamphlets produced by various newspapers and the MoI. Churchill's own publication of his wartime speeches in *Into Battle* in February 1941 also made a significant contribution to their availability.¹¹⁶ The book sold out almost immediately and went through five editions within the first month demonstrating its obvious popularity. By 1941, people had clearly overcome their initial diffidence. The press gave it favourable mentions but the *Daily Express* was especially effusive in its praise.¹¹⁷ It highlighted examples which displayed, amongst other things, his statesmanship, horse sense, irony, humour, vision, generosity in praise and his leadership. Among the phrases cited, "blood, toil tears and sweat" was hailed as "the greatest sentence since 'England expects every man to do his duty' " and although the other principal Churchillian aphorisms were mentioned, 'fighting on the beaches' was not. Recognising the historicity of Churchill's speeches, though, the *Express* claimed it was "not the book of the week. Nor of the month or the year. *Into Battle* is a book for all time".

By the beginning of 1941, Churchill's phrases were coming into common usage and often made appearances as headlines in the press. Especially prominent was 'Finest Hour', which had been the most readily adopted of all the phrases in 1940. The *News of the World* wrote of Churchill's finest hour, for example, when he told the House about the destruction of the French Fleet and a pilot spoke to his mother describing his exploits in the Battle of Britain as his own finest hour.¹¹⁸ 'Many and the few' was also becoming a prominent phrase, appearing in the famous MoI poster and in the MoI pamphlet, *The Battle of Britain*, which was published in March 1941.¹¹⁹ By 1942, the phrase was common currency and was paraphrased in the title of Leslie Howard's film *The First of the Few* (1942) about the development of the Spitfire and even made an

¹¹⁵ "Give us the Tools and We Will Finish the Job", broadcast, 9th February 1941, Charles Eade, *The Unrelenting Struggle*, (Cassell, 1942) pp. 54-63. The speech attracted an audience of 70% on the Home Service and an estimated 50% of the forces stationed in Britain tuned in. Internal memorandum, 1st March 1941, RCONT, File 2, BBC Written Archives.

¹¹⁶ The dissemination of Churchill's speeches will be examined more thoroughly in Chapter 3.

¹¹⁷ *Daily Express* 4th May 1941.

¹¹⁸ *News of the World* 7th July 1940 and *Daily Express* 7th August 1940.

¹¹⁹ See Figure 14, p. 119 and Chapter 3 for more on the *Battle of Britain* pamphlet.

appearance in the *Beano* when a badly drawn figure of Churchill thanked Lord Snooty and his chums for their efforts in collecting for the war fund (Figure 9).¹²⁰

It is rather fanciful to assume, therefore, that Churchill's speeches met with instant popularity the moment they were uttered in 1940. Where the press highlighted a phrase in the initial reports of a speech it was often not the one for which it has been remembered. Nor did the public immediately take to the speeches, and they certainly did not always react in the way that was intended nor indeed remembered. People's tendency to be over-optimistic curtailed Churchill's realism or else his grim warnings spread alarm and despondency. An appreciation of fine rhetoric was quite beyond the vast majority who relied instead on the media to indicate which were the most potent phrases. A simple case of widespread repetition helped to pare away the more banal utterances leaving the more historical ones and in this process the memory of the popularity of the "Unknown Warriors" broadcast was lost. So rather than the summer of 1940 seeing the apogee of the Churchill Legend, it merely saw its beginnings. A further ingredient was required to ensure the speeches became legendary and more than a string of fine words was necessary for Churchill to become incomparably popular. This emerged with the advent of the Blitz.



Figure 9 *The Beano*, 1942

¹²⁰ Denis Gifford, *Run Adolf, Run*, (Corgi, 1976).

It has already been indicated how Churchill was welcomed, especially in 1940, as the honest messenger as well as the eternal yet realistic optimist. More importantly, he was seen to be the antithesis of Chamberlain and in contrast to Chamberlain's indecision, Churchill was seen as the sole leader who would induce a decisive course of action to bring the war to a swift and favourable conclusion. All of these facets of his image were undoubtedly vital to the creation of the Legend in the post-war period, but during the war at least, Churchill's appeal also operated on a less abstract and more personal level. While other public figures (with the possible exceptions of the King and Queen and Lord Beaverbrook) were portrayed in the media as being aloof and even inaccessible, Churchill was just the opposite.¹²¹ His approachability was constantly reiterated throughout the war, and his Pickwickian character was as important to the creation of his Legend as were his speeches.

Without a doubt, Churchill's own personality secured this part of his image and innumerable memoirs and diaries testify to the jocular, magnanimous and benevolent side of his character.¹²² Even those who are famously less sympathetic still went to great pains to underline Churchill's magnitude and largess, as well as record some of his more amusing aphorisms.¹²³ These were not nearly so famous as they were later to become, but the wartime audience was nevertheless aware of Churchill's jocular and light-heartedness.¹²⁴

¹²¹ The King and Queen had been subject to an extensive propaganda campaign since their succession to the throne in 1936 in place of the more popular Edward and as a result of the intensification of their visits to the public, they were perceived as being more amenable than previous generations of royalty. Beaverbrook was viewed favourably as a result of his 'Pots to Planes' campaign and the Spitfire Fund. See MO FR 1064 *The Big Debate*, 29th January 1942 for more on the public's perception of politicians.

¹²² Churchill's detective, W.H. Thompson, wrote an almost idolatrous account of his time with Churchill revealing only the nicer side to his character (*I was Churchill's Shadow*, (Johnson, 1951)). John Colville, Churchill's secretary, also wrote extensively and favourably about Churchill both in his diaries and, for example, in "The Centenary of Churchill" in *History Today* Vol. 25, January 1975, pp. 3-14.

¹²³ Lord Alanbrooke's diaries, (edited by Arthur Bryant, *Turn of the Tide*, (Collins, 1957)) are generally hailed as the first piece of iconoclastic literature against Churchill. However, the editing and Alanbrooke's foreword hardly detracted from the 'great man' Legend which was emerging at the time. The later unexpurgated version (edited by Alex Danchev and Daniel Todman, *War Diaries 1939-1945 by Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke* (Weidenfield and Nicholson, 2001)) might reveal a more critical temperament but both versions show Alanbrooke's overall reverence for Churchill. See M.R.D. Foot "How on earth did we win?" in *The Times*, 17th May 2001 for a comparison of the two volumes.

¹²⁴ John Ramsden points out that none of Churchill's sayings were included in the 1937 edition of Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations* but that no less than 61 were included in the post-war edition. Similarly, his words only warranted one mention in the 1941 edition of *The Oxford Dictionary of*

The newsreels were the most apposite medium by which this particular aspect of his character was communicated to the public for, unlike the newspapers, they could show his naturally puckish mannerisms and his boyish grin in context. Often news items would end with a close-up shot of him smiling impishly into the camera, accompanied by some comment about his determination or his value to the country. More tangibly, his individualism was expressed in his choice of clothing. For those closest to him this was doubly eccentric and Alanbrooke, for example, wrote often of his green and gold dragon dressing gown, which he thought “a marvellous garment”, “worth going miles to see”.¹²⁵ The public, being less privy to such personal attire, had to make do with the less flamboyant but equally eccentric velvet siren suits, or ‘rompers’ as Churchill called them which appeared on both formal and informal occasions. The newsreels were particularly fond of pointing out Churchill’s choice of clothing and surmised that “Mr. Churchill wears his siren suit when he means business”, referring to his man of action image on the eve of the invasion of the continent in 1944.¹²⁶ At other times, Churchill favoured a double-breasted coat and yachting cap when visiting naval installations, any of his numerous honorary military uniforms, or what has become the most familiar outfit, the Homburg hat and bow tie. The latter costume was the most usual on his visits to towns and cities around Britain, and the hat would be waved on the end of his walking stick in salute to the attendant crowds. By using the stick in this way, he prevented it being a symbol of infirmity and instead it became a badge of identity. Churchill’s hats were also a familiar Churchillian symbol and had been fostered by the media since the General Election of 1910.¹²⁷ By 1940, the public were used to seeing them and they raised laughter when he appeared in them in newsreels.¹²⁸ The media had also developed an almost morbid fascination with them and commented freely when no such attention need be drawn to them. In its exposé of the new Government, *Picture Post* included a page of Churchill in 20 different hats (Figure 10) and as he touched down in Egypt during one of his visits to the troops, the *Pathé* newsreel commented enigmatically that

Quotations; by 1953 this number reached as many as 26. *Man of the Century* (Harper Collins, 2002) p. 50.

¹²⁵ Bryant, *Turn of the Tide*, pp. 262 and 305.

¹²⁶ *Gaumont British News, General Montgomery Pays a Visit to the Fleet*, 18th May 1944. Note that although Churchill accompanied Montgomery, he is not mentioned in the title of the clip, indicating Churchill’s decline by 1944.

¹²⁷ Churchill gave the story of how he had inadvertently put on a small felt hat, had then gone for a walk along the beach at Southport, and was photographed in it. Since then cartoonists and ‘paragraphists’ have used the hat as his symbol. Winston Churchill, *Thoughts and Adventures* (Macmillan, 1943) p. 28.

¹²⁸ MO FR 141, *Newsreels* (2), 29th May 1940.

CHURCHILL HAS ALWAYS HAD A PLEASANT TASTE IN HATS



Figure 10 *Picture Post* 1st June 1940

the plane brought “a mysterious Mr. Bullfinch. No disguise but a fine collection of hats”.¹²⁹ Similarly, on the occasion of his birthday during the Teheran conference the British Press Unit bought him a “Persian style titfer” which he put on momentarily for the benefit of the camera but looked decidedly embarrassed in doing so.¹³⁰ Again, looking somewhat uncomfortable in Greece, he donned a traditional Greek mountaineer’s Shepka which “added to the Prime Minister’s already extensive collection

¹²⁹ *Picture Post*, 1st June 1940. *Pathé Gazette, Premier in Middle East*, 24th August 1942.

¹³⁰ *Pathé Gazette, The Big Three in Teheran*, 9th December 1943.

of hats”.¹³¹ Churchill’s discomfiture on these occasions was perhaps because he thought the media’s obsession with his hats “rubbish” and despite his public image, held no particular passion for varied headgear.¹³²

One of the symbols with which he was associated and that he clearly did relish was the cigar.¹³³ Post-war stories abound of how he would time the lighting of his cigars so that he might not be seen without one, for certainly by this date it was what the public had come to expect.¹³⁴ But it also hit a particularly resonant note with the general public during the war. People would ask him for the half-smoked cigar as a keepsake of his visits to factories and military installations or else Churchill would award them unprompted. This caused *The Times* to muse on what people might do with a soggy stump.¹³⁵ Thousands of cigars were sent to him from all over the world, almost all of which had to be returned or destroyed because of the risk of their being poisoned. One school girl sent him a box that she had won in a dance competition in gratitude “for the wonderfull [sic] way in which you are leading our beloved country in these troubled times”.¹³⁶ Another Canadian private stationed in England was less gracious in his gift and sent him a box of six cigars a friend had given him, except that he had smoked all but one because, he explained, “nothing I like better is a good cigar [sic]”.¹³⁷

The news media were certainly responsible for enshrining the cigar in the Churchill image and gave it perhaps greater prominence than his hats. Early in the war, for example, both the *Daily Herald* and the *Daily Mail*, two unusual newspapers for such light-hearted articles, carried the same photograph of Churchill smoking a cigar and another of two sailors sharing his habit commenting, “The influence of the First Lord of the Admiralty has been felt in many quarters. It has now reached the lower deck”.¹³⁸ It was perhaps the jocular way in which the newsreels referred to the cigar that caused the “affectionate laughter” that often accompanied his appearances in newsreels.¹³⁹ On one occasion, Churchill was seen taking a cup of tea outside Number 10 at a mobile canteen presented to the British nation by the Free Austrians. The close-up shot showed him drinking tea but attracted the comment “but wait a minute. Something’s missing” and

¹³¹ *Pathé Gazette, Big Three Conference*, 15th February 1945.

¹³² Churchill, *Thoughts and Adventures*, p. 28.

¹³³ For more on the creation of the cigar prop see Chapter 3: note 10.

¹³⁴ Ramsden, *Man of the Century*, p. 140. See also Calder, *The People’s War*.

¹³⁵ *The Times* 4th February 1941. Keeping the cigar stumps would prove to be a lucrative option, selling for over £2,000 each 60 years later in Sotheby’s, December 2002.

¹³⁶ Schoolgirl to Churchill, 16th November 1941, CHAR2/436.

¹³⁷ Letter to Churchill, undated but 1941, CHAR2/436.

¹³⁸ *Daily Herald* 23rd October 1939. Also *Daily Mail* on the same date.

¹³⁹ HI Special Report, *Film Correspondents’ Reports on Newsreels*, 23rd March 1942, INF1/293.

then, as he placed the emptied mug on the canteen's window and drew on his cigar, "Ah, yes, corolla" as if the image was only then complete.¹⁴⁰ There was clearly great importance attached to such occasions for Churchill would clearly have been more comfortable taking tea inside Number 10 rather than outside on a cold February day. But by throwing comfort aside, Churchill was showing his sympathy with those people who had no choice but to queue at canteens, as well as furthering diplomatic relations with the Austrians.¹⁴¹

If the public image of Churchill was not complete without his cigar, then it was equally lacking without him making the V-sign. The V-sign eventually became so closely associated with Churchill that by D-Day the *Pathé* newsreel could claim him to be "the author of the V-sign".¹⁴² In reality, the V-sign was the creation of the MoI and was first disseminated on the continent as a symbol of defiance to the Nazi occupation. On 20th July 1941, the campaign was officially launched in Britain amidst a flurry of publicity whilst Churchill issued a message to Europe indicating the significance of the symbol.¹⁴³ It immediately caught the public's imagination.¹⁴⁴ Within a few weeks, it had been daubed by the million on walls and in windows around the country; it had been adopted in over a hundred advertisements taking up nearly 3,400 column inches; several hundred news items, letters, leaders and cartoons had been published; the BBC gave lessons in how to knock or call for a waiter using the dot-dot-dot-dash Morse code for the letter V and adopted the same as its own call sign.¹⁴⁵ Within a week, however, the MoI regretted having introduced the campaign to Britain at all, sharing the belief with the more thoughtful members of the public that it should have been "reserved for the occupied countries where it appears to have considerable point".¹⁴⁶ Without it being attached to some definite aim it had potential to become meaningless or else auger immediate

¹⁴⁰ *Pathé Gazette, Newsbriefs*, 23rd February 1942.

¹⁴¹ Harold Nicolson wrote with exasperation of the speech given by Churchill upon the presentation of the canteen, "for years we have been trying to give such a lead in our broadcasts to Austria [that is, a promise to restore Austrian independence]...Now, merely because he has to say a few words of thanks, he says the very words which would have been invaluable to us two years ago". Nicolson diary, 18th February 1942, p. 212.

¹⁴² *Pathé Gazette, The Day*, 8th June 1944. Sixty years later and Dominique Enright anachronistically claimed "as [Churchill] walked through the crowds during the Blitz he always acknowledged the people's greetings with the V-sign" showing how the V-sign and the Blitz became mistakenly synonymous. *Winston Churchill: the Greatest Briton*, (Michael O'Mara Books, 2003), p. 194.

¹⁴³ "V is for Victory" message, Churchill, *The Unrelenting Struggle*, pp. 198. See Appendix 2 for the text of the speech.

¹⁴⁴ HI Weekly Report, 23rd-30th July 1941, INF1/292.

¹⁴⁵ MO FR 863, *Victory 'V' Campaign*, 8th September 1941.

¹⁴⁶ HI Weekly Report, 23rd-30th July 1941, INF1/292.

invasion of the continent and the imminent end of the war.¹⁴⁷ As a consequence, the MoI attempted to limit its use, for example, in deciding not to issue photographs of Churchill making the sign “on the grounds that the Government was not anxious to encourage the V-sign”.¹⁴⁸ Churchill, however, was irrepressible and was shortly seen on all visits and at all opportunities making the gesture.

The affinity of Churchill and the V-sign was a natural one and it needed little encouragement for it to take hold. Since the outbreak of war, Churchill had been closely associated with the ‘thumbs up’ sign denoting his confidence in the war effort and had come to be associated with victory. This was made indelible with his speeches in 1940 when he spoke of “victory at all costs”, and proclaimed that Britain would “wage war until victory is won”.¹⁴⁹ The V-sign became a shorthand to express this fortitude, confidence and determination and it is little wonder that as ‘victory’ fever swept the country in July 1941, Churchill should become the singular exponent of the campaign.

By 1942, Churchill’s private office started to be inundated with fruit and vegetables from members of the public from all over the world sporting the V-sign. Accompanying one such ‘victory potato’ was a note that Churchill should be glad to know that his “inspiring leadership has penetrated so deep into the heart of the countryside that even our potatoes are giving the V-sign!”¹⁵⁰ Besides victory-imbued fruit and vegetables, Churchill was also sent stones and pebbles bearing the emblem, poems and songs on a victory theme, gloves and socks emblazoned with Vs, and three prodigious photographs of Abu Fahdi and his victory lamb of Jerusalem.¹⁵¹ Churchill was also sent “a not very attractive contraption in the form of a V with a bad effigy of the PM at the top of one of the arms of the V and one of Hitler on the other, Mr Churchill’s outstretched arm thrusting back down the even less attractive chin of Hitler [sic]”.¹⁵² It is unlikely that Churchill ever knew of such sublime gifts although his private office felt compelled to write back with thanks for “one of your home-grown cucumbers in the shape of a V-sign”.¹⁵³ But rather than these gifts being sent in 1941, the year the campaign was launched, most were received in 1943 suggesting that there was some delay in the sign becoming associated with Churchill (either that or it took a further two

¹⁴⁷ HI Weekly Report, 16th-23rd July 1941, INF1/292.

¹⁴⁸ Minutes, 28th August 1941, Monckton Trustees Papers/7, Bodleian Library (henceforth MT).

¹⁴⁹ “Blood, tears, toil and sweat” speech, House of Commons, 13th May 1940, Churchill, *Into Battle*, pp. 207-8.

¹⁵⁰ Cecil Aspinall-Oglander to Churchill, 2nd November 1943, CHAR 2/471.

¹⁵¹ Abu Fahdi to Churchill, no date but 1943, CHAR 2/475.

¹⁵² Anonymous memorandum, 22nd March 1943, CHAR 2/479.

¹⁵³ “ESL” to Mr. J. Roberts, 2nd March 1943, CHAR 2/477.

years for his inspiring leadership to penetrate into the countryside!).¹⁵⁴ If this delay were genuine, it would indicate once again the media's centrality to the generation of the Churchill Legend and just as they promoted Churchill's famous rhetoric, so too did they develop the symbolic associations with him.

In addition to the determination embodied in Churchill's patronage of the V-sign, it also revealed his more jocular side. In his mischievous way, he was rarely seen in the newsreels saluting in the polite manner; instead, he seemed to relish making the ruder British version, grinning broadly as he did so as if fully aware of its double meaning and savouring the devilry. His sense of humour was best expressed in the newsreels as they could show how his comments and witticisms were received in their correct context. Churchill's first speech to the American Congress in December 1942, for example, was hailed in all the media and by the public as "a great historic utterance".¹⁵⁵ Most of the principal daily newspapers carried the full text of the speech and it was by these means that most people would have become familiar with his words as there was a delay in the newsreel film reaching Britain.¹⁵⁶ The newspapers dwelled upon the historicity of the occasion, Churchill being the first British Prime Minister to have addressed Congress, and quoted Churchill's words with reference to his lineage:

The fact that my American forebears have for so many generations played their part in the life of the United States, and that here I am, an Englishman, welcomed in your midst, makes this experience one of the most moving and thrilling in my life, which is already long and has not been entirely uneventful. I wish indeed that my mother, whose memory I cherish across the vale of years, could have been here to see. By the way, I cannot help reflecting that if my father had been American and my mother British, instead of the other way round, I might have got here on my own.

Whilst it may be possible to detect wry understatement in these words, in their written form they are unlikely to have broken even a smile across the face of the reader. Yet in Congress they caused peals of laughter, especially at the latter remark, which was

¹⁵⁴ Alternatively, the increase in the number of gifts and letters received in 1943 could be attributed to the system by which they were filed. The Chartwell Papers provide a wealth of material and indicate a significant rise in the amount of correspondence from the general public in this year, but the absence of any critical letters suggests that the retention of the letters may not have been automatic and that, therefore, any assumptions made about his popularity on the strength of the volume of letters in the archive may not be accurate.

¹⁵⁵ HI Weekly Report, 22nd-29th December 1942, INF1/292.

¹⁵⁶ The speech was given on 26th December and appeared in the press the next day. It was not until 8th January 1942 that the same was released in the newsreels.

captured by the newsreel cameras and reinforced by careful editing. The sight of Churchill in his usual oratorical stance, “smoothing his palms down his frame – beginning by patting his chest, then smoothing his stomach and ending down at the groin”,¹⁵⁷ emphasised his girth and helped to create the image of a jocund, avuncular stereotype to which the public took wholeheartedly. HI found that 80 per cent of those who commented on the newsreels of Churchill in America responded favourably to them (16 per cent were neutral and 4 per cent unfavourable) and were “as pleased as ever to see Mr. Churchill looking like Pickwick”. “Mr. Churchill”, HI surmised, “seems to be one of the best screen stars of the present day”.¹⁵⁸

On other occasions, the newsreels would emphasise his conviviality and exuberance. On one occasion, for example, when Churchill was inspecting a troop of American home guardsmen in London, the commentator pointed out how Churchill had had a good look at an armoured car, adding as Churchill broke into a broad grin, “and now we can look at the Prime Minister and feel as cheerful as he does”.¹⁵⁹ Churchill’s cheeriness as presented in the newsreels was in direct correlation with confidence about the military campaign.¹⁶⁰ Through 1940 he was generally characterised by his grimness and determination to succeed, but by the end of 1942 with the Allied successes in North Africa, references to his good humour increased. His visit to the troops in Egypt in August and his later return after the triumph of Operation Torch the following year were especially felicitous occasions. Churchill’s obvious pleasure at being in the field shone through the newsreel footage and he was shown being cheered by crowds of soldiers whose enthusiasm for him was equally clear. The *Pathé* newsreel emphasised that “Mr. Churchill’s visit [was] a typical Winstonian surprise, the breezy friendliness [went] down well with the boys. Not least of all the Aussies, one of whom was reported to exclaim, “‘Christ it’s old Winnie’ ”.¹⁶¹ Reciprocated pleasure was equally evident when he addressed some 3,000 assembled troops in an amphitheatre in Carthage to congratulate them on their victory over Rommel’s forces and once again when he addressed a further crowd from an impromptu dais on the back of a lorry. “It almost looks like an ENSA show” noted one newsreel¹⁶² whilst *Pathé* underlined how “these front line chats are a

¹⁵⁷ Nicolson diary, 9th September 1941, p. 185.

¹⁵⁸ HI Special Report, *Film Correspondents Reports on Newsreels*, 23rd March 1942, INF1/293.

¹⁵⁹ *British Paramount News, Nation’s Rulers See Aspects of War*, 13th January 1941.

¹⁶⁰ This will be expanded further in Chapter 3.

¹⁶¹ *Pathé Gazette, Premier in Middle East*, 24th August 1942.

¹⁶² *Gaumont British News, Planning for Victory*, 10th June 1943.

delight to the troops who relish every word".¹⁶³ The informality of the occasions and the sense of familiarity they engendered with their references to 'Winnie' and the 'chats' he had rather than the speeches he made helped to foster the notion of his friendliness and approachability.

The Blitz

His affability did not only belong to the military front but it was also transported to the Home Front where he was seen amongst the smoking ruins of recently Blitzed towns. One such visit took him to Wales and the South West in April 1941. Here he was seen chatting to ordinary people in the street whose homes had recently been destroyed. In Swansea and Cardiff Churchill was said to have "electrified" the public with his cheerful personality.¹⁶⁴ "The people of South Wales swarm[ed] around their Winnie, cheering him to the echo".¹⁶⁵ And in Bristol "Mr. Churchill gave his stirring pledge, 'we'll give 'em it back' " which became his familiar catchphrase during the early part of the war.¹⁶⁶ The press also placed a great deal of currency on his other famous phrase when he would shout "Are we downhearted?" to which the attendant crowd would chorus "no". The latency of the phrase was suggested when the *Daily Express* felt able to use the traditional response to headline its article on Churchill's visit to the Blitzed areas of London without further explanation.¹⁶⁷

Churchill's catchphrases in these instances testify to his fortitude and determination to see the war through to victory and the fortunate few who managed to get near to Churchill during such visits could see the same manifested within him. One MO observer who saw Churchill several times during his various tours noted that his face "was set in grim anger at the sights of perhaps the most blitzed of our towns and at the same time his eyes filled with sympathy for its people".¹⁶⁸ Walking behind him "was like going behind a great magnet, which drew out from every side street, house and bomb crater, any sadness, depression or doubt that might exist, gathering it up in to itself and leaving behind a remagnetised, re-energised, more determined than ever people".¹⁶⁹

¹⁶³ *Pathé Gazette, Churchill in Africa*, 10th June 1943

¹⁶⁴ *Pathé Gazette, The Man of the Moment*, 17th April 1941.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ "No, roared the crowd" *Daily Express* 8th January 1941.

¹⁶⁸ MO FR 1052, *The Far East and the Future*, 22nd January 1942.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

The same was said to be true of his visits to factories and defence installations around the country. Afterwards, production figures rose and where naval ratings had been “depressed and nervy” before Churchill arrived, “his wonderful sympathy put new heart into all of them”.¹⁷⁰

Such concern for the people of the country on Churchill’s part was genuine and unaffected. John Colville chronicled a particularly grim visit to Plymouth in the aftermath of numerous air raids where casualties and material damage had been very heavy. After touring various sites in the town and neighbouring areas, the party returned to Chequers to be met with a catalogue of bad news from the Middle East. That evening “the Prime Minister was in a worse gloom than I have ever seen him” wrote Colville, but rather than it being on account of the news of the wider war, Colville thought “it was largely Plymouth that causes him such melancholy – he keeps on repeating: ‘I’ve never seen the like’ ”.¹⁷¹ General Ismay recorded a similar event when accompanying Churchill on a visit to an air raid shelter in London where forty people had been killed following a direct hit. Of the crowds he wrote:

One might have expected them to be resentful against the authorities responsible for their protection; but, as Churchill got out of his car, they literally mobbed him. ‘Good old Winnie’ they cried. ‘We thought you would come to see us. We can take it. Give it ‘em back’. Churchill broke down, and as I was struggling to get to him through the crowd, I heard one old woman say, ‘You see, he really cares, he’s crying’.¹⁷²

While Churchill may have been moved by the reception he received, this lapse in stoicism did not last long for he then “pulled himself together [and] proceeded to march through the dockland at breakneck speed”.¹⁷³

The news media rarely, if ever, reported Churchill to be thus affected by the sights he saw during his Blitz visits for this would have contravened his image as the man of grim determination and courage. This did not mean, however, that he was portrayed as being steely and unemotional; on the contrary, his compassion was often underlined. The *News Chronicle*, for example, carried as its headline “Premier in tears after ovation”

¹⁷⁰ A Report on Home Opinion, 6th March 1942, PREM 4/100/1. E.M.Long to Churchill, 25th May 1941, CHAR 2/420.

¹⁷¹ Colville diary, 2nd May 1941, pp. 381-2.

¹⁷² Lord Ismay, *The Memoirs of Lord General Ismay* (Heinemann, 1960), pp. 183-4.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.* p. 184.

following his speech to Congress in December 1941.¹⁷⁴ Such an admission is scarcely befitting of a strong, masculine warrior or a traditional leader of war. Instead, it revealed a duality to Churchill's character, counter-balancing the man of action image with a more benignant side and disproving the German propaganda claims that he was a warmonger bent on blood and destruction.

Such first hand knowledge of Churchill's compassion, as seen by Ismay's old woman, would have had a tremendous impact on that particular community, even if it were communicated no further, and it contributed in no small part to the invigorating effect Churchill's visits had. Following his tour of Bristol after one of the heaviest raids the city had ever had, the newsreels reported the people of Bristol "came up smiling",¹⁷⁵ whilst everyone in Plymouth was "cheerful" following their visits from the Luftwaffe and Churchill,¹⁷⁶ and Churchill himself "received a tonic from the courageous Lancastrians...while he himself act[ed] like a tonic to the stout-hearted people in the front line".¹⁷⁷ Such was the degree of ebullience that Churchill encountered on his tours that he dwelt on it, albeit rather fancifully, in a broadcast at the end of April:

I went to some of our great cities and seaports which had been most heavily bombed, and to some places where the poorest people had got it worst. I have come back not only reassured, but also refreshed...it is just in those places where the malice of the savage enemy has done its worst, and where the ordeal of the men, women and children had been most severe, that I found their morale most high and splendid. Indeed, I felt encompassed by an exaltation of spirit in the people which seemed to lift mankind and its troubles above the level of material facts in to that joyous serenity we think belongs to a better world...This ordeal by fire has even in a certain sense exhilarated the manhood and womanhood of Britain...All are proud to be under the fire of the enemy.¹⁷⁸

It is difficult to imagine that the ordinary member of the public was filled with pride when dodging bombs and flying debris during an air raid, but such speculation certainly appealed to Churchill's sense of drama and intrepidity. While the ordinary citizen might be expected to seek shelter, Churchill was not known to shy from danger, in spite of the best efforts of those around him to protect him. Ismay recorded how on one occasion

¹⁷⁴ *News Chronicle* 27th December 1941.

¹⁷⁵ *British Paramount News, West Forgets Blitz*, 17th April 1941.

¹⁷⁶ *Gaumont British News, Mr. Churchill Reassured and Refreshed*, 1st May 1941.

¹⁷⁷ *Pathé Gazette, Mr. Churchill in Lancashire*, 1st May 1941.

¹⁷⁸ "Westward, look, the land is bright" broadcast, 17th April 1941, in Churchill, *The Unrelenting Struggle*, pp. 106-114. See Appendix 2 for the text of the speech.

Churchill had been visiting a London dockyard but was in “one of his truculent moods” and insisted on staying long beyond when it was safe to do so. On the return journey, a shower of bombs fell in front of Churchill’s car and as they reached Downing Street Ismay was “rebuked by all and sundry for having allowed the Prime Minister to take such risks”. Frustrated by Churchill’s obstinacy, he retorted “in the language of the barrack room, that anybody who imagined that he could control the Prime Minister on jaunts of this kind was welcomed to try his hand on the next occasion”.¹⁷⁹ The public, too, knew of the risks to which Churchill exposed himself but it was reported in the press as being symptomatic of his bravery rather than his foolhardiness. When he went to France in January 1940, for example, he was widely reported to have refused a shrapnel helmet in preference for his yachting cap.¹⁸⁰ However, his penchant for watching the dog fights during the Battle of Britain caused consternation with fears for his safety as well as confusion as to the official policy on air raids.¹⁸¹ During the early part of the Blitz at least, this stated that immediately upon hearing the sirens people should proceed to the nearest air raid shelter, yet Churchill famously stayed to continue his business or else to watch the raid from the roof of the annexe to Number 10.¹⁸² It was soon realised though that this policy contributed to a decrease in productivity as people were sent scurrying for shelter when even a single raider had been spotted far off which caused considerable irritation and unnecessary alarm for the workers who could barely settle down to a job. This was compounded with the singular ineffectiveness of the sirens themselves. Often they would be sounded for no reason or else would remain silent when large numbers of enemy aircraft were nearby and a raid imminent. Churchill’s announcement, therefore, that something was to be done about the “prolonged banshee howlings” was welcomed with “satisfaction and details [were] eagerly awaited”.¹⁸³ The system that was finally implemented, of roof spotters who could warn of imminent danger, proved a more successful – and less worrisome – method and Churchill came to be held personally responsible for the improvement.

¹⁷⁹ Ismay, *Memoirs*, p. 184.

¹⁸⁰ This was reported, for example, in the *Daily Express* 10th January 1940 and *Pathé Gazette*, *First Lord Goes to Sea*, 15th January 1940.

¹⁸¹ See for example *Daily Express* 29th August 1940 and MO FR 374, *Special Note on Air Raid News* 29th August 1940.

¹⁸² Churchill’s bodyguard later wrote of how he had to have a sandbag shelter erected on the roof to which Churchill would only retire when shrapnel began raining down. Thompson, *I Was Churchill’s Shadow*, p. 62.

¹⁸³ “The War Situation” speech, House of Commons, 5th September 1940, Churchill, *Into Battle*, p. 269. Public reaction to the speech in *HI Daily Report*, 6th September 1940, INF1/264.

Some of the popularity of Churchill's announcements on the siren policy stemmed from the immediacy of the subject matter. The great part of the population would have had their daily lives interrupted by intermittent siren blasts even if they had not experienced an actual raid. Affecting so many people, it is little wonder that Churchill's explanation provided a tonic. This direct relevance to people's lives also explained the popularity of some of his other speeches. Such speeches which acknowledged ordinary people's contributions to the war effort were considered "a nice pat on the back" and, judging from Churchill's postbag, people seemed pleased to have their own efforts recognised by someone with as high a standing as Churchill.¹⁸⁴ This recognition, in fact, seemed to be a crucial ingredient in public contentment and people wanted to hear of themselves being commended. When the media's attention turned away from the British experiences of war to diplomacy and the Anglo-American relationship during and after the Atlantic Meeting in 1941, there emerged a hope among a section of the public that one of Churchill's next broadcasts would be devoted to the Home Front, as though people were feeling somewhat left out.¹⁸⁵ Such self-interest and self-centredness was perhaps hardly surprising nor was it anything new. Human nature, it seems, had changed little since the First World War, when Vera Brittain returned from France to find the public more concerned about their own experiences and inconveniences than those of the soldiers on the Western Front.¹⁸⁶ In such circumstances, it is hardly surprising that Churchill's speeches on the Home Front should have been so well received. Equally, it is quite unremarkable that his visits to the Blitzed towns of Britain should have had such an impact on the popular memory of the war.

His visits as outlined above lend themselves readily to the idea of Churchill's seamless popularity throughout the war as he was seen being cheered by vast crowds, waving his hat on his stick, standing atop a pile of rubble, and shouting defiant slogans. The crowds he drew on his visits to Leeds and Bradford in May and December 1942, which the newsreels showed to number in the tens of thousands, would certainly testify to this image.¹⁸⁷ The enthusiasm of the people was obvious as they burst into a chorus of *For He's a Jolly Good Fellow* as Churchill stood on the steps of Bradford town hall. The 25,000 strong crowd in Leeds was equally excited and excitable. What was missing from these newsreels, however, were pictures of Churchill visiting any devastated areas of the

¹⁸⁴ HI Weekly Report, 18th-25th May 1943, INF1/292.

¹⁸⁵ HI Weekly Report, 27th August – 1st September 1941, INF1/292.

¹⁸⁶ Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth*, (Virago Press, 1992).

¹⁸⁷ Newsreels were released of his Leeds trip on 21st May by all of the companies except *Universal News*, and of his Bradford tour on 10th December, by all but *Universal* and *British Gaumont*.

cities. The only images seen were of him leaving a munitions factory in Leeds and of him giving speeches on the steps of the respective town halls. Coverage in the local newspapers similarly omitted any mention of bombed areas suggesting that he did not in fact visit any.¹⁸⁸ One of the last newsreels of him touring a bombsite was when he visited Coventry in October 1941, a year after it suffered the devastating raids.¹⁸⁹ The footage of this visit, however, only lasted for approximately ten seconds as the people of Coventry were “very sensitive” and thought that any boasting about having returned to normal conditions might be seen as an invitation for a further bombing campaign against the city.¹⁹⁰ The same concern had been expressed earlier in various places around the country where it was thought that visits from royalty or distinguished statesmen attracted too much attention.¹⁹¹ There is no evidence to suggest that coverage of Churchill’s tours of bombed towns ended on account of this fear, but his visits to non-military installations in Britain virtually ceased after his visit to Bradford in December 1942.¹⁹² Even before this date, in spite of the strength of the image we have inherited today, the newsreels in which he is shown inspecting bomb damage number only half a dozen.¹⁹³ This attests to the centrality of Churchill to the Myth of the British at war, of how he became the totem of courage and determination, and the paradigm of the most gracious way to react to and cope with the conditions brought about by the Blitz.

In spite of all the guidance on what was good behaviour during an air raid, it was not always easy to respond positively to aerial bombardment. HI found that immediately after an air raid:

¹⁸⁸ *Yorkshire Post* 18th May 1942 and *Telegraph and Argus* 5th December 1942. See also the *Huddersfield Examiner* 5th December 1942 for more on Churchill’s visit to Bradford. The *Examiner* did not mention his visit to Leeds.

¹⁸⁹ All of the five newsreel companies released the story on 2nd October 1941. The last newsreel footage of Churchill’s visits to bomb sites was during his tour of Newcastle, Sheffield and Hull (released 15th November 1941). Each company, however, only covered one visit to one town.

¹⁹⁰ Minutes of Executive Board, 26th September 1941, MT7.

¹⁹¹ HI Weekly Report, 14th-21st May 1941, INF1/292.

¹⁹² It would be interesting to compare the amount of newsreel coverage of Churchill’s visits to Blitzed towns and that of royal visits. In much the same way as Churchill’s, the tours by the King and Queen, but especially the Queen, have become part of the fabric of the Myth and was widely resurrected upon the Queen Mother’s death in 2002. The same was true of Churchill’s funeral in 1965. See Ramsden, *Man of the Century*, pp. 3-36 for an account of Churchill’s death and his funeral.

¹⁹³ The post-war period and the growth of television clearly had a huge impact on the way in which Churchill’s visits have been remembered as the repetition of footage entrenched this image. Also the television audiences would have had more exposure than wartime audiences as the television companies had a larger stock of film to choose from, for as mentioned above, each newsreel company only showed one visit to one town during any one tour.

People are dazed and in a condition of mild shock. They are surprised and thankful to be alive. They feel *important* and are inclined to exaggerate the experiences through which they have passed. Those who suffered loss are feeling sad and depressed. A few feel hopeless. All are tired. There is a considerable degree of isolation, both physical and psychological. There is a craving for attention, sympathy and encouragement.¹⁹⁴

Such reactions, although contrary to the Myth, are perfectly understandable, indeed are to be expected. During the war, however, the media gave little coverage to this behaviour in fear that it might cause a collapse in morale.¹⁹⁵ Churchill's speech in which he spoke of people's pride in being under the fire of the enemy, therefore, was at askance with the reality of post-raid emotions. This speech, unsurprisingly, was not well-received by the public, the first of his principal broadcasts to be actively disliked. It was thought that he belittled "the public anxiety in the blitzed towns" and failed to recognise people's distress.¹⁹⁶ His description of people's exaltation under fire was considered "the first error of judgement he has made in his oratory" and the speech showed that he was "getting out of touch with real opinion in this country".¹⁹⁷ If this were so, then Churchill was not the only channel to underestimate the impact of the Blitz in this way. The news media clearly had a hand in the propagation of the Myth and one BBC broadcast, for example, underlined how people who had lost their friends or who had lost all of their possessions still had "their usual smiles...and the only effect on the spirit of the people was to raise it higher than ever".¹⁹⁸ This distasteful dismissal of the sufferings of such people was eventually recognised as having a potentially harmful effect and guidelines were drawn up as to what was and what was not acceptable in the media's coverage of the bombed towns. "Morale", wrote HI "should never be overplayed. The raid will have made many people frightened and far from 'heroic'. They resent a standard being set up which they know to be impossible".¹⁹⁹ This memorandum clearly never reached Churchill's desk. Churchill, however, might not be blamed for his optimism when he said that he found people's morale "most high and splendid"²⁰⁰ since his presence in the midst of the Blitzed and the bombed-out "was enough to make people hide their

¹⁹⁴ *Preparation of Air Raid Commentaries*, 31st March 1941, INF1/174.

¹⁹⁵ For more on the way civilians reacted and the plans made for them under bombardment see Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale*, (Allen and Unwin, 1979) pp. 108-136.

¹⁹⁶ HI Weekly Report, 23rd-30th April 1941, INF1/292.

¹⁹⁷ MO FR 744, *Churchill vs. Hore-Belisha*, 18th June 1941.

¹⁹⁸ Quoted in McLaine, *Ministry of Morale*, p. 128.

¹⁹⁹ *Preparation of Air Raid Commentaries*, 31st March 1941, INF1/174.

²⁰⁰ "Westward, look, the land is bright" broadcast, 17th April 1941, in Churchill, *The Unrelenting Struggle*, pp. 106-114.

anxiety”.²⁰¹ And he may genuinely never have seen the real anguish caused by the raids. His ‘magnet of depression’ provided a much needed tonic for those affected by the Blitz, either through the novelty of his celebrity or simply the distraction from the mundane, but that is not to say the effects were long-lasting nor deep-seated. As HI warned, the anxiety was “there all the same”.²⁰²

It is extremely difficult to ascertain whether or not any of Churchill’s visits were ever unwelcome for the memoirs published after the war were obliged to subscribe to the Churchill Legend and during the war the news media had a keen patriotic image to maintain. One exception to this was the *Manchester Guardian*’s coverage of Churchill’s visit to Sheffield in November 1941. It mentioned that “There was little demonstration at first, but at last one loud voice managed to raise a cheer”.²⁰³ But true to form, other press coverage of the occasion confirmed Churchill’s popularity, the *Yorkshire Post* for example, commented that “A deep-throated roar swept up to him. It made a Gallup poll seem trivial”.²⁰⁴

The newsreels in particular were not averse to creating impressions that were not strictly genuine.²⁰⁵ During one of his visits to America, for example, as Churchill was seen leaving the Senate, the commentary gushed, “his path...was flanked by enthusiastic Congressmen...crowds had been waiting hours to see him”.²⁰⁶ The ‘enthusiastic Congressmen’ were, in reality, one man who reached over the cordon to shake Churchill’s hand and two uninterested policemen, together with a small group huddled in the distance with their backs to the distinguished visitor, either unaware or incurious of his presence. Similarly, the crowd that had been waiting further along for hours, more closely resembled a coterie of women from a typing pool pleased but not excited because their lunch break had been extended. Such chicanery was also used on footage shot on the Home Front and this was especially true of the twilight war period.

During this time, the crowds were never quite so big as the soundtrack would suggest nor were they as enthusiastic as the commentary indicated. At Randolph Churchill’s wedding in October 1939, for example, the First Lord’s arrival at the church was accompanied by sounds of a crowd as vast and as excited as that at a cup final

²⁰¹ HI Weekly Report, 23rd-30th April 1941, INF1/292.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ *Manchester Guardian* 10th November 1941.

²⁰⁴ *Yorkshire Post* 10th November 1941.

²⁰⁵ MO FR 16, *The Faking of Newsreels*, 7th January 1940.

²⁰⁶ *Pathé Gazette, Prime Minister’s Visit to USA*, 27th May 1943.

match.²⁰⁷ In reality, the crowd was, at most, four deep and people were merely looking on at the spectacle of a wedding rather than cheering fervently. The same discrepancy between the size of the crowd and the volume of cheering accompanied his journey to France in January 1940 and as he became Prime Minister in May.²⁰⁸ By 1941, the soundtrack began to match the crowd and the vastness of those in Leeds and Bradford during his visits there in 1942 certainly warranted the tumultuous reception he was heard to receive. The commentary too was apt to underline Churchill's popularity for whilst the small, unenthusiastic crowd was watching Randolph's wedding and was heard to be cheering madly, the commentator noted, "there's no doubt about his popularity".²⁰⁹ On other occasions the newsreels left little room for doubt either, proclaiming, "we all have a good opinion of him"²¹⁰, "he got the country behind him"²¹¹ and "Great Britain has a Prime Minister who inspires the whole free world".²¹² It is impossible to ascertain whether this discrepancy between the soundtrack and the image was deliberate deception on the part of the newsreel companies or whether it was merely poorly chosen library stock filling in the silence of the film.²¹³ But whatever the motive, it created the impression of tremendous popularity on the part of Churchill, especially when the commentary left no room for doubt.

During the war, the public were fed a particular image of Churchill which portrayed him as being at once formidable and relentless yet also approachable and friendly. A contemporary account by the historian Philip Guedalla reveals how these two aspects of his character complemented each other. Shortly after Churchill ascended to the premiership:

The watching cameras awarded public curiosity with the image of a cheerful leader with a slightly unusual taste in hats and a way of fingering firearms with an air of brusk anticipation. Soon his cigar, his dogged mouth, his purposeful gay eye were seen abroad...presently a square hat and a big cigar were seen ascending

²⁰⁷ *Pathé Gazette, Churchill Wedding*, 9th October 1939.

²⁰⁸ *Pathé Gazette, First Lord Goes to Sea*, 15th January 1940 and *The Mad Dog Runs Amuck*, 13th May 1940.

²⁰⁹ *Pathé Gazette, Randolph Churchill's Wedding*, 9th October 1939.

²¹⁰ *Pathé Gazette, Mr. Churchill Sees for Himself*, 31st October 1940.

²¹¹ *Gaumont British News, Many Happy Returns to Mr. Churchill on his 66th Birthday*, 2nd December 1940.

²¹² *British Paramount News, Merseyside Showed No Uneasiness*, 1st May 1941.

²¹³ Sound equipment during the war was notoriously bulky and heavy and so a great deal of silent film was shot and the sound added later. See Len England's interview with Kenneth Gordon in Jeffrey Richards and Dorothy Sheridan (eds.) *Mass-Observation at the Movies* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987) pp. 422-423.

steep declivities in the neighbourhood of coastal defences with considerable agility...The headgear varied but the stick and cigar were always the same.²¹⁴

Echoing the newsreels, it continued that there “could be no mistaking what they felt about him, as the cheers rang out”.²¹⁵ This honeymoon period, however, did not last the course of the war. As early as spring 1941, people were becoming tired of his relentless catchphrase “Are we down-hearted?” and by the late summer of 1942, after nearly three years of extensive exposure to Churchill, the public’s enthusiasm was expended.²¹⁶ Whilst some loved to hear of his “boyish tricks”, a few regretted “his playing to the gallery” and disliked “his frequent use of the V-sign.”²¹⁷ The following year and the malaise of the public was still evident. “He has been boosted and publicised too much”, said one office worker, “and the public are beginning to tire of Public Idol No. 1”.²¹⁸ He was also criticised for flaunting his cigars as it heightened class differences, for few could afford or even obtain such luxuries in wartime.²¹⁹ This shift in public opinion was mirrored in the coverage in the media. From 1943, he was no longer seen on the Home Front, at least in the newsreels where he would have had the widest audience, but instead was only pictured during his trips abroad or else engaged in some other diplomatic pursuit. The one exception to this was when he was seen reviewing American paratroops in March 1944, but by then the emphasis lay with the soldiers themselves; his attendance was only peripheral to the glorification of the fighting men and the anticipation of the invasion of the continent.²²⁰

Churchill’s Pickwickian image was evidently one which developed in the first half of the war but which lost its novelty as the war progressed. It was an image which had a broad appeal, for his friendliness welcomed everyone and his sense of humour enhanced his affability. This was channelled into compassion for the people and, at least as the image would suggest, an understanding of their suffering. At the same time there was a serious side to his character, and one which was under no illusions about the grimness of the road to victory. Whilst people may have appreciated this realism in 1940, by the end of 1942, war-weariness had set in and people’s hopes for a quick conclusion intensified. Churchill’s bumbling and boyish grinning hardly portended a vigorous war effort and so

²¹⁴ Guedalla, *Mr. Churchill*, pp. 309-310.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 310.

²¹⁶ Colville diary, 23rd April 1941, p. 377.

²¹⁷ *HI Weekly Report*, 17th-25th August 1942, INF1/292.

²¹⁸ *MO FR 1890, Mass-Observation Bulletin*, 16th August 1943.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ This change began around 1942 with the victories in North Africa. See Chapter 4: Foreign Affairs.

this part of his image became rather stale as the war progressed. In 1940, however, it reflected the British public's own sense of humour to laugh in the face of adversity, where, for example, Blitzed shops might declare themselves to be "open – more open than usual".²²¹ Nevertheless, it gradually became part of the popular image of 1940 and therefore of the war itself. This ultimate appreciation and adoption of the Pickwickian image was facilitated by its anodyne nature. In all, there was little in Mr. Pickwick to alienate anyone.

C o n c l u s i o n

The rise of the Churchill Legend was concomitant with the development of the Myth of the British at war. As the individual became increasingly significant in the national war effort, especially with the advent of the Blitz, so the publicity machinery, both Governmental and commercial, emphasised the importance of unity and tenaciousness. On all sides people were being told that "Britain can take it" and being congratulated for their steadfastness and resolve. Gradually this became part of the national memory of the war. Just two years after the Fall of France, contemporary historical accounts testified to the stoicism of the British, commenting that, "It was somehow comforting to feel that their backs were to the wall...life seemed infinitely simpler now that they could see the precipice in front of them. For they were free to concentrate on action...They set about it in a mood of cheerfulness."²²² Somerset Maugham also fondly reminisced about how he had returned to England from France after it had capitulated and found "at Liverpool, in the officials who came on board, in the porters who took our luggage, in the people in the streets...you felt the same spirit of confidence. Fear of invasion? Not a shadow of it...Winston Churchill had inspired the nation with his stern and resolute fortitude."²²³ This contrasted sharply with the opinions recorded by HI and MO two years before, and showed how determination and tenacity had been established as the paradigm of the wartime temperament and how people had come – however wrongly – to *remember* it that way. The same temperament was also displayed during the Blitz. It became customary to acknowledge that Churchill was the instigator of this change of heart compared with the days of Chamberlain, for as Captain Cunningham-Reid begrudgingly admitted, Churchill "alone has rallied this nation from what might well have

²²¹ For traditional British reactions to the war and the way in which they have become entrenched in the memory of the war see Mark Connelly, *We Can Take It!* (Longman, to be published February 2004).

²²² Guedalla, *Mr. Churchill: A Portrait*, p. 303.

²²³ Somerset Maugham, *Strictly Personal*, (Doubleday Doran, 1941) p. 184-85.

been fatal despondency. He has given encouragement and inspiration to this country and to all countries all over the world.”²²⁴ Churchill’s speeches undoubtedly played an important part in the consolidation of this particular aspect of the Myth, as R.H. Kiernan confirmed: “The people hung upon Churchill’s words and were never cast down by ill-fortune. In the months of his leadership he had taught them to bear all things with constancy”.²²⁵ His speeches provided a simple, memorable maxim of how an individual was supposed to behave and react to the war; to do otherwise would be to fail in one’s duties as a citizen. By defining this ideal, the longevity of the speeches was ensured as they appealed to the British sense of national identity as it was newly defined by the war. But the popularity of the speeches also depended upon this definition of Britishness being adopted. This was done as the Myth developed between the Blitz and 1942 and was reflected in the fact that in 1940 Churchill’s speeches did not always have the immediate impact that is now supposed: it took time for them to be consolidated and rendered into iconographic status. The same is true of Churchill himself.

Whilst it would be foolish to claim that Churchill’s standing rested solely on the popularity of his speeches, they did account for a great deal of his reputation by providing the foundation of historical longevity. Once the speeches had become the expression of Britain’s national character, Churchill, as its perceived originator, became imbued with the same qualities. Again, this is reflected in the fact that amid the media tumult of adoration in the first few months of his premiership, the public was wary of his leadership and when he failed to deliver the anticipated early victory his standing suffered. It was only when the speeches were ascribed their legendary status that Churchill too was assured of his position in history. If Churchill had stepped down at the end of the summer of 1940 or if the war had come to an abrupt but successful end before the advent of the Blitz, his words may not have been quite so apposite. They did not necessarily reflect the public’s attitude in the summer of 1940, they reflected an ideal which existed largely with hindsight; they would not have echoed the tenacity of the British public, for the public would not have yet had the opportunity to display it. The public’s dislike of Churchill’s broadcast in which he spoke of their exalted spirits under bombardment testifies to this. If Churchill were speaking accurately of people’s reactions they would only have been pleased that their bravery was being recognised, instead they recognised the discrepancy between the ideal and the reality.

²²⁴ Captain Cunningham-Reid, *Besides Churchill – Who?* (W.H. Allen, 1942) p. 45.

²²⁵ R.H. Kiernan, *Churchill*, (George Harrap, 1942) p. 209.

The inaccuracy of people's memories of their stoicism in the long 1940²²⁶ mirrored the retrieved memories of their embrace of Churchill. As he came to power, Churchill undoubtedly inculcated some – if not many – admired qualities and he was accepted as the much-needed antidote to Chamberlain's inactivity. He may also have instilled bravery among the less courageous and inspired confidence of victory in an otherwise bleak future. But this did not mean that acceptance of him was total nor universal. Eden was still the most popular choice for Prime Minister on the eve of Churchill's promotion, and there were those who were wary of his leadership for political reasons as well as for fears of their own safety. The warmonger image that had been cultivated during the bore war period simultaneously served to inspire and cause apprehension. The media having none of these reservations were free to indulge in a hagiolatrous salutation of Churchill's premiership but equally were duty bound to stand united behind the country's new leader when Britain faced the moment of its greatest peril. It was this reverential coverage in the media which provided the 'proof' to the public (and to historians when it was required later) of the unencumbered acceptance of Churchill in 1940. The Myth of the war, therefore, had just as big a hand in the creation of the Churchill Legend as Churchill did in the creation of the Myth and they provided each other with the assurance of posterity.

Rather than Churchill being instantly popular as current assumptions maintain, people were slow to accept him and his standing was apt to fall as well as rise. Equally, his speeches failed to have the immediate impact that is commonly supposed. Instead, it took time for both Churchill and his speeches to become widely revered by the British public. Churchill's ascendant reputation over the course of the next two years testifies to the delayed properties of Churchill's ascendancy to icon status and this will be explored in the next chapter.

²²⁶ That is, also encompassing the Blitz experience.

Chapter 3

Propaganda and Manipulation

Introduction

The Legend of Churchill is popularly held to have arisen spontaneously amongst a grateful and adoring public in the realisation that had it not been for Churchill's outstanding leadership during the summer of 1940, Britain would have capitulated to Germany or would have been invaded with disastrous consequences. The previous chapter dispelled this idea by showing that Churchill's popularity was not concrete in 1940, rather it was slow to develop and emerged concomitantly with the national Myth of 1940. This chapter expands upon this theme, examining how the Legend of Churchill emerged and which bodies were involved in its genesis. In doing this, it challenges the assumption that the Myth arose spontaneously, arguing instead that there was a deliberate programme of propaganda which either aimed to maintain Churchill's standing amongst the public or else inadvertently had the same effect. This was complemented by more general propaganda which had the same aim of uniting the country in its battle against Nazism and from this Churchill's position emerged as all the stronger. Three sources of propaganda stand out in this examination of publicity surrounding Churchill: Churchill himself, the MoI and the press.

Churchill had long been accused of being something of a self-publicist and as a young man freely admitted to it. Writing to his mother about his exploits on the north-western frontier, he told her of how "I rode on my grey pony all along the skirmish line where everyone else was lying down in cover. Foolish perhaps, but I play for high stakes and given an audience there is no act too daring or too noble. Without the gallery, things are different".¹ Leo Maxse later wrote of him, "He is a soldier of fortune who has never pretended to be animated by any motive beyond a desire for his own advancement."² And Lloyd-George said of him that, "He would make a drum out of the skin of his own mother in order to sound his own praises".³ Through the war, the same accusations were levelled at him by those who sought to discredit him and this has passed into historical tradition. There has been a consistent failure to question this part of

¹ Randolph Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill*, (Heinemann, 1966) Vol. 1, Companion vol. 1, part 2, p. 792.

² *National Review*, No. 287, January 1907, p. 758.

³ A.J.P. Taylor, *Lloyd George: A Diary by Frances Stevenson*, (Hutchinson, 1971) p. 253.

Churchill's image and it is widely accepted that he was a dedicated self-publicist. Roy Jenkins, for example, writes of Churchill's days as a subaltern as being characterised by his dominating desire "to attract the greatest possible attention" and the same view colours his judgement of Churchill's later life.⁴ However, it is unfair to apply the same label that had been given to a brash young man who felt he had to prove himself equally to a man of 65 who was secure in his position. There is, indeed, plenty of evidence to suggest that Churchill did enjoy media attention. A glance at a newsreel, for example, shows Churchill's ease in playing to the camera. However, this chapter argues that there is a difference between an extrovert and a self-publicist and during the war years Churchill could not be accused of the latter.

The second principal disseminator of propaganda looked at in this chapter is the national press. Seventy-seven per cent of the population took a daily morning newspaper and presumably far more than this read a newspaper intermittently.⁵ The press' influence on the public cannot therefore be gainsaid. The press remained free throughout the war despite the Government's warnings that it might be taken over if it did not lead a more patriotic line. Nevertheless, each newspaper was still governed by its editorial policy and, to varying degrees depending on the newspaper, the opinions of its proprietor. This chapter reveals how these influences affected the depiction of Churchill in the national dailies and also examines the relations between Churchill and Fleet Street.

All of the material published by the press was administered by the MoI, a further important agent of propaganda. It was responsible for the dissemination of news and within this role co-ordinated the release of Churchill's speeches to the news media. It also produced vast quantities of material which publicised either Churchill or his speeches in line with its functions to inform the public and maintain morale. These represented two of the carefully outlined roles the MoI was expected to fulfil but revealing the level of distrust of Governmental publicity in general, the Ministry was careful, even paranoid, that it should be seen to be discharging its duties within a fully democratic framework.⁶ This meant that its propaganda was overt ('black' or covert

⁴ Roy Jenkins, *Churchill*, (Pan Books, 2003) p. 22. This view is shared by, among others, Paul Addison, ("The Political Beliefs of Winston Churchill" in *Royal Historical Society Transactions*, Fifth Series, Vol. 30, 1980, pp. 23-48) and John Charmley (*Churchill: The End of Glory*, Hodder and Staughton, 1993).

⁵ L. Moss and K. Box, "An enquiry into Newspaper Reading Amongst the Civilian Population" (June-July 1943), Wartime Social Survey, RG23/43, PRO.

⁶ The memoirs of senior members of the MoI testify to this. See for example Kenneth Clark, head of the Films Division, *The Other Half*, (Murray, 1977), and two of the Ministers of Information Duff Cooper, *Old Men Forget*, (Hart Davis, 1953) and John Reith, *Into the Wind*, (Chatto and Windus, 1949). For more on the democratic considerations involved in the development of the MoI see

propaganda was reserved for enemy and occupied countries) and served to instruct or maintain morale rather than indoctrinate the public as Nazi and Soviet propaganda was seen to aim for. This view of a benign MoI was adopted by Ian McLaine in his seminal work on the Ministry and which is still used as the leading book on the subject.⁷ Whilst McLaine's work remains invaluable, an examination of MoI propaganda surrounding Winston Churchill suggests that McLaine's notion of a benevolently intentioned Government department requires some revision. Not only does it raise questions about the legitimacy of a Government department actively promoting a singular political figure, it also reveals how some of the propaganda the Ministry produced clearly stepped outside the boundaries of what the MoI publicly – and historically – declared was democratically acceptable.

The development of the Churchill Legend as it arose from the publicity surrounding him also raises the question of the efficacy of propaganda. The British public were obviously discerning and accepted or rejected various campaigns on their own merits. In this way, the Spitfire Fund proved immensely popular whilst the Empire campaign did not.⁸ It would, therefore, be imprudent to suggest that propaganda itself, and solely propaganda, created the Churchill Legend, for clearly the public had to want to accept the message of propaganda if it were to achieve its goals. But an additional dimension is added when the ubiquity of Churchill's image is considered. This is taken up in the final section on commercial dissemination but is also explored *in passim* in the rest of the chapter and reveals just how pervasive the image of Churchill was in wartime Britain.

Winston Churchill

For one so inextricably associated with propagandistic speeches during the Second World War it is perhaps surprising to discover that Churchill had little time for propaganda itself. He saw it as detracting from the war effort and said on many occasions to the effect that "war must be won by deeds not words".⁹ Any propaganda

Temple Willcox, "Projection or Publicity? Rival Concepts in the Pre-War Planning of the British Ministry of Information" in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 18, 1983, pp. 97-116.

⁷ Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale*, (George Allen and Unwin, 1979).

⁸ For more on the Empire campaign see McLaine, *Ministry of Morale*, pp. 223-4.

⁹ Churchill quoted in Robert Bruce-Lockhart, (edited by Kenneth Young), *Diaries of Bruce-Lockhart* (Macmillan, 1973) p. 85.

undertaking in Churchill's view was "like killing Hitler with your mouth".¹⁰ In holding this attitude he mirrored a great many other members of the Government, including many of the most senior personnel of the MoI, and yet there seems to have been, to his mind at least, a clear distinction between propaganda and publicity.

By the late 1930s, Churchill had gained a reputation of being a self-publicist. His attendance at the siege of Sidney Street in 1911, where police had tracked two anarchists, attracted a great deal of criticism. Balfour asked, incredulously in the House of Commons, "I understand what the photographer was doing there, but the Home Secretary?"¹¹ Churchill's career during the 1930s, with his drive to rearm and his opposition to appeasement, also attracted the same criticism. The Anti-Nazi Council had approached him originally in 1936 because of the prominence he might lend to their cause and he accepted the invitation, presumably as it afforded him the opportunity to espouse his own. Churchill complemented any media attention he might have gained for his crusades with the articles he wrote for many of the principal British newspapers but it was his command of the live performance where he demonstrated greatest skill. He was also acutely aware of his public image and he is famed for his association with cigars, hats and his characteristic lisping diction. Churchill cultivated the latter by means of a set of false teeth which were specially made so that a gap was left between the plate and the roof of his mouth to maintain the pronunciation of a sibilant 's'.¹² He also encouraged his association with cigars and it is well-known that he would pause before entering a room to light a cigar and that he timed the lighting of them carefully so that he would be seen with a full cigar rather than an unmanly stump.¹³ Those who were best acquainted with Churchill knew, however, that the cigars often remained unlit, even if they were well-chewed, which would suggest that it was a deliberate act to encourage this image. If so, Churchill was hardly the only person in the public eye to do this. As Churchill wrote in 1932, "one of the most necessary features of a public man's equipment is some distinctive mark which everyone learns to look for and to recognise. Disraeli's forelock, Mr. Gladstone's collars, Lord Randolph Churchill's moustache, Mr. [Austen] Chamberlain's eyeglass, Mr. Baldwin's pipe are of the greatest value". He went on, "I

¹⁰ Churchill quoted in Andrew Boyle, *Poor Dear Brendan* (Hutchinson, 1974) p. 269.

¹¹ Balfour quoted in Sidney Smith "The Siege of Sidney Street", *Finest Hour*, no. 43.

¹² See the Royal College of Surgeons of England web page, <http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/services/museums/exhibition/Churchill> for more technical details regarding the production of the teeth.

¹³ Strube found that the first cartoon of Churchill with a cigar dated from 1913, Low's first depiction was 1926 and his own was 1931 (*Illustrated*, 20th November 1954) but the early ones tended to show him smoking simply in a social situation. It was from around 1927 that the Churchillian cigar became a common image although it obviously had not become synonymous by 1932 as Churchill looked more to the hat than the cigar as his own prop. See note 11.

have never indulged in any of them, so to fill the gap the cartoonists have invented the legend of my hats".¹⁴

These images and Churchill's impulsive antics built up in the public mind so that by the late 1930s, it was thought by the more cynical that Churchill would stop at nothing to gain publicity for himself.¹⁵ He was thought to have instigated the "What price Churchill?" poster campaign which appeared in London in the summer of 1939 as part of the crusade to gain his admission to the Cabinet; the real architect, when he eventually came forward, was given little media attention so that the assumption that it was Churchill never found redress.¹⁶

Once war had broken out, Churchill busied himself with his duties as First Lord but there was still an element of scepticism of Churchill's motives in his contact with the public. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Churchill's announcement of the arrival of Canadian troops in his broadcast in December 1939 caused a great deal of criticism in the press. Although on the whole criticism was levelled at the system of censorship in operation, it added further ammunition for those in politics who wished to denigrate Churchill. The Conservative Party's newspaper, *Truth*, which had long attempted to discredit Churchill and even in war made no attempt to ameliorate its opinion, excused the MoI and the Press Censorship Bureau and asked "why Winston Churchill, who surely knew of the arrangements between the Ministry and the Press, made the announcement. Was he given permission to do so, or did he snatch at the opportunity to lend an added piquancy to what he had to say?"¹⁷

The most lasting criticism of Churchill in this period was of the inaccuracies of the numbers of U-boats he claimed to have been sunk. Arthur Marder gives the official figures, as of 12th November 1939 and agreed upon after the war, as six U-boats lost out of a total of 57 which were in operation at the start of the war, and nine lost out of 66 by the end of January 1940, giving a total of fifteen, but Churchill's announcements were rather more optimistic than that.¹⁸ David Irving wrote that Churchill claimed 24 successes by December and Stephen Roskill noted that Churchill claimed only 12 U-

¹⁴ Winston Churchill, *Thoughts and Adventures*, (Macmillan, 1943), p. 28.

¹⁵ See Ramsden, *Man of the Century* pp. 38-49 for more on Churchill's image as reckless adventurer and self-publicist.

¹⁶ J.M. Beale revealed his identity in *Advertisers' Weekly* 17th August 1939 but it was not taken up in the more popular press.

¹⁷ *Truth* 22nd December 1939. For *Truth*'s attempts to denigrate Churchill see Richard Cockett, "Communication, Ball and *Truth*" in *Historical Journal* Vol. 33, No. 1, 1990, pp. 131-142.

¹⁸ Arthur Marder, *From the Dardanelles to Oran*, (Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 123

boats were left in commission by January 1940.¹⁹ However, Churchill's principal speeches do not make any such claim. Cautiously in November, Churchill announced in the House of Commons that "It is difficult to give assured figures because many a marauder who is sunk in deep water leaves no trace behind. There must be a doubt and dispute about every case in which we do not have a survivor, a corpse or a wreck to show".²⁰ He did venture further to speculate though, "I think it would be a fairly conservative estimate that the losses of U-boats lie between two and four in every week according to the activity which prevails". In January, he claimed, "It seems pretty certain that half the U-boats with which Germany began the war have been sunk, and that their new building has fallen far behind what we expected".²¹ These intimations of the total numbers of successful hits were clearly grossly over-estimated, even within wartime conditions in which accuracy might be sacrificed to the speed with which the figures could be issued. Even Churchill admitted that estimates of German construction were excessive.²² The Director of Anti-Submarine Warfare, Captain A.G. Talbot, whose numbers were confirmed as being much more realistic after the war, argued that by the end of April 1940 only 19 U-boats had been destroyed, that 2 were under repair and that 43 were still in active commission.²³ This caused a great number of disagreements between Talbot and Churchill and on this account, Talbot was dispatched to sea.²⁴ It is difficult to guess at Churchill's motives for this rather deliberate manipulation of the figures although two schools of thought emerge. On the one hand, Irving and Andrew Roberts use it to show Churchill's determination to be the master of 'his' Admiralty and to claim fame for himself by announcing outlandish successes, thereby revealing a darker side to Churchill's character.²⁵ On the other hand, it could be seen as Churchill's concern for the morale of the country and of the Navy itself. As Donald McLachlan wrote, the Navy was "the only service which was engaged at the time...it was essential that the

¹⁹ David Irving, *Churchill's War* (Veritas, 1989). Stephen Roskill, *Churchill and the Admirals*, (Collins, 1977), p. 94.

²⁰ "The Loss of the *Royal Oak* and the War at Sea" speech to the House of Commons 8th December 1939, Winston Churchill (edited by Randolph Churchill), *Into Battle*, (Cassell 1941), pp. 136-141.

²¹ "A House of Many Mansions" speech to the House of Commons 20th January 1940, Churchill, *Into Battle* pp. 158-162.

²² W.P. Crozier, *Off the Record*, 18th January 1940, (Hutchinson, 1973) p. 121.

²³ Marder, *From the Dardanelles* to Oran, p. 124.

²⁴ The principal thrust of Churchill's memorandum in which he suggested Talbot's despatch concerned the accuracy of Talbot's method of counting U-boat losses rather than attacking the figures themselves. Churchill surmised that "the conclusion to which this official [Talbot] comes is that all of the attacks, except the actual fifteen of which we have remnants have failed. This conclusion leads me to think that it might be a good thing if Captain Talbot went to sea as soon as possible". ADM 205/6 quoted in Marder p. 124. His fate was shared by Hallet (see Chapter 1).

²⁵ Irving makes this claim in *Churchill's War* and Andrew Roberts in *Hitler and Churchill* (Wiedenfield and Nicholson, 2003).

nation should have some sense of action and success and achievement; and the only material that was readily available at that time came from the U-boat war. It was essential to make the most of what was happening, but in the process the truth suffered".²⁶ This revealed Churchill's commitment to wage war, as he allowed nothing to obstruct the path to victory and took whatever action he felt was necessary to achieve that goal, including measures which might be frowned upon in peacetime. In this instance, he took it upon himself to be a one-man Ministry of Morale and as such stole the thunder from the proper Government department, the MoI.

By the end of 1939, the MoI's reputation amongst the press and the public was already that of a sinking ship, if it had not already sunk. To rescue it and make it a creditable department of the Government was by no means an easy task and, after Lord Macmillan's failure in the post, it fell to John Reith to rectify the situation in January 1940.²⁷ One of the main criticisms which had been levelled at the MoI was its handling of the release of news, but in this task the Ministry was at the mercy of the Services themselves. All were guarded in their release of news lest it be of use to the enemy and they were deeply suspicious of journalists in general.²⁸ Reith's consuming antipathy of Churchill, which was to some extent reciprocated, meant that relations between the MoI and the Admiralty were all the more strained. Just ten days into his job as Minister, Reith wrote disparagingly in his diary of Churchill's "ridiculous idea" that shipping losses be announced weekly instead of daily, as Churchill felt that it was bad for morale for them to be published with such regularity.²⁹ In this, Churchill probably had a good case as the constant reports contradicted the otherwise optimistic tenor of the news in the press. The disparity between the two could only have caused confusion or mistrust in the media in the long term and in 1941 Churchill ordered the practice to be abandoned altogether.³⁰ In an attempt to countermand the negative effect it was having he called upon the people, "Let no-one be down-hearted when he reads of daily losses, or listen to them

²⁶ McLachlan "Naval Intelligence in the Second World War" in *Royal United Service Institution Journal* lxi, August 1967, p. 224, cited in Marder, p. 123.

²⁷ Lord Macmillan was appointed Minister of Information when the MoI was set up on 5th September 1939 and was replaced by John Reith in January 1940. Duff Cooper replaced him when Reith was moved to Transport in May 1940, and finally Brendan Bracken was installed at the Ministry from July 1941 until the end of the war.

²⁸ It was not until April 1940, for example, that the Services agreed to a formal delineation of the relationship between the MoI and the departments. For a draft of the agreement between the Air Ministry and the Admiralty see PREM1/339, Public Record Office.

²⁹ John Reith, (edited by C.H. Stuart), *The Reith Diaries*, (Collins, 1975), 15th January 1940, p. 237. Hereafter Reith diary. See also Churchill to War Cabinet, W.P.(G) (40) 8, 11th January 1940, Broadcast of Shipping Losses, and W.P. (G) (40) 26th April 1940, Chartwell Papers 19/8, Churchill College. Hereafter CHAR.

³⁰ It was announced by Churchill in his statement on the war situation, 9th September 1941.

reiterated by the BBC”.³¹ Reith continued to block Churchill at Cabinet, at least until one day when Churchill was expecting a showdown over the announcement of shipping losses and took out his papers to argue his point. When asked his opinion, however, Reith just said that he agreed to publish the figures weekly. “Churchill was so surprised. ‘Oh thank you’ he said and pushed the papers back into his box”.³²

In addition to protecting the morale of the public, it could also be said that Churchill’s motivation was to uphold the prestige of ‘his’ Navy. The Navy could easily have been seen to have failed in its role as the bulwark against Nazism on account of the large numbers of ships being sunk and Churchill pointedly remarked in a speech in Manchester, “I think you will agree that up to date the Navy has not failed the nation”.³³ It was perhaps this consideration which led Churchill to demand the boarding of the *Altmark* after it had been spotted in a Norwegian fjord. Although it violated Norwegian neutrality, Churchill signalled to the captain of the *Cossack* that unless the Norwegian torpedo boat in the area agreed to escort the *Altmark* to Bergen, that he should proceed to “board the *Altmark*, liberate the prisoners and take possession of the ship, pending further instructions”.³⁴ Such a dashing escapade after five months of a rather uneventful war naturally attracted widespread publicity and, given the press’ fixation with Churchill by this date, it followed that he be accredited with some of the glory. His involvement in the episode appealed to his well-documented sense of adventure and drama and added to his ‘man of action’ image. As Lord Lloyd wrote, “had it been any other Ministers courage would have failed them”.³⁵

The sense of high drama accompanied Churchill on many occasions. Perhaps the most notable example during the war was his announcement of the sinking of the *Bismarck* in May 1941. Churchill had made a speech in the House of Commons and was awaiting the news of the German battleship and as the *Daily Express* screamed “a scrap of paper made the greatest story”.³⁶ The story related how Churchill gave his speech on Crete and of British losses and the sinking of the *Hood* but all the while was petulant, grim and angry, obviously waiting for some news. Just as he sat down, Brendan Bracken

³¹ “A Time to Dare and Endure”, Free Trade Hall, Manchester, 27th January 1940, Churchill, *Into Battle*, p. 164.

³² Reith diary, 29th April 1940, p. 247.

³³ “A Time to Dare and Endure”, Free Trade Hall, Manchester, 27th January 1940, Churchill, *Into Battle*, p. 164.

³⁴ Churchill signal to the *Cossack*, 16th February 1940, CHAR19/5.

³⁵ Lord Lloyd to his son, 18th February 1940, Lloyd papers quoted by Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, Vol. VI*, (Heinemann, 1983) p.154.

³⁶ *Daily Express* 28th May 1940. The headline implied Churchill’s greatness as previous ‘scraps of paper’ had started the First World War and, unwittingly, the Second.

burst in and walked amongst the rows of MPs and handed Churchill a note. Therewith, Churchill stood up and announced that the *Bismarck* had been sunk, once more commanding attention and inviting the criticism that he retain the choicest morsels of news for himself to announce. Sceptics might say that the scene was carefully rehearsed for the timing was impeccable, but unless Bracken was waiting with his ear pressed hard to the door it seems unlikely. Such an accusation would serve simply to label Churchill as a pure self-publicist but other evidence would suggest that he was not.

Requests from many different sources for permission to use Churchill's speeches, image or name poured into 10 Downing Street, mainly from 1941 onwards. The personal secretaries dealt with many of these requests without Churchill ever being troubled by them. Some came from commercial firms who paid the courtesy of asking whether or not Churchill would give sanction to their particular venture. At first, these tended to be refused, much to the disappointment of the companies concerned. Balding and Mansell Printers and Advertising, for example, approached Downing Street for permission to use a photograph of Churchill in a calendar for the following year. The reply suggested a standard policy had been established, perhaps with Churchill's consultation, and the request was met with the polite refusal that "the Prime Minister would...prefer that his portrait should not be used for the purpose you mention" with which Balding and Mansell were not content.³⁷ Again they tried, pointing out that "a well-known MP in a speech said that everyone should cut out an illustration of Churchill and pin it to the wall" and that they would gladly produce a more lasting portrait, but again it was said "I can only say that the Prime Minister prefers that his portrait should not appear in any form of commercial advertising".³⁸ Unrelenting, eight months after their first approach the advertising firm wrote once again more petulantly, "we would draw your attention to the fact that a well-known firm has sent a personal card to their customers. On the front is a photograph of Mr. Churchill sitting at his desk and inside are these words: 'This inspiring portrait of the organiser of our coming victory is sent to you with happy recollections of our association and with high hopes for your well-being'".³⁹ Unsurprisingly, from 1941 onwards similar requests and those for permission to produce Toby jugs (of which there were many) and mascots in the likeness of Churchill were met with the standard neutral response that "there is no legal necessity for you to

³⁷ Balding and Mansell to Churchill, 20th November 1940, Kathleen Hill, Churchill's secretary, to Balding and Mansell 26th November 1940, CHAR2/424.

³⁸ Balding and Mansell to Kathleen Hill, 28th March 1941, Hill to Balding and Mansell, 1st April 1941, CHAR2/424.

³⁹ Balding and Mansell to Hill, 10th July 1941, CHAR2/424.



obtain Mr. Churchill's consent" but that "this must not be taken as an expression of approval or disapproval".⁴⁰ Of course, this did not stop the less scrupulous firms exploiting Churchill's fame and position, as in the case cited by Balding and Mansell.

Where most requests were parried by Churchill's personal office, on occasion requests for publicity were passed on to Churchill personally. These might be from charitable organisations asking, for example, to name a hospital bed or a hospice after him, permission for which was usually granted.⁴¹ Most letters that were referred to Churchill, however, tended to concern the reproduction of his speeches. Some came from Government departments wishing to issue their own propaganda, such as the Stationery Office which wanted to produce a précised form of *Into Battle* for overseas. Churchill referred the matter to Bracken who suggested that Churchill agree, for a 10 per cent royalty fee.⁴² Bracken also recommended that Churchill allow an anthology of his "aphorisms, reflections, precepts, maxims, epigrams, wise sayings, truisms, pleasantries, jocosities and paradoxes" that had been proposed by the Polish journalist Francis Czarnomski to be published in a book entitled *The Wisdom of Winston Churchill*.⁴³ Bracken had given Czarnomski a letter of recommendation to give to the publisher Daniel Macmillan even before Churchill's permission had been sought. Churchill, however, was "not very keen upon the publication of this anthology"⁴⁴ for reasons undisclosed, and since Bracken did not "have any strong feelings about Mr. Czarnomski and his proposed anthology" it was decided that "it should be easy to induce Mr. Daniel Macmillan to drop the idea".⁴⁵ The book remained unpublished until 1956 when it took on the same format and carried the same foreword that had been proposed fifteen years earlier.⁴⁶

Just as potential authors sought permission to quote Churchill, film production companies also approached Downing Street to be allowed to use his speeches in their films. Perhaps surprisingly for one so devoted to the medium of film, Churchill rarely

⁴⁰ This, for example, was the response to a request to include Churchill's photograph in an advertisement in the *Hardware Trade Journal*, 4th September 1941, CHAR2/419.

⁴¹ For example, a Mr. McCandless promised to donate £1,000 to charity if he were allowed to name a bed after Churchill in the Victoria Hospital, Blackpool, 30th April 1941, CHAR2/420. The request for the naming of the hospice came via the MoI and Brendan Bracken, as the Minister in charge, recommended that Churchill allow it. Francis Brown to Churchill, 30th July 1943, CHAR20/101.

⁴² Hill to Churchill, 16th February 1941, CHAR8/803.

⁴³ This was the proposed foreword of the book. Attachment to memorandum from Hill to Bracken 20th October 1941, INF1/990.

⁴⁴ Hill to Bracken 20th October 1941, INF1/990.

⁴⁵ "A. H." to Hill, 23rd October 1941, INF1/990.

⁴⁶ Francis Czarnomski, *The Wisdom of Winston Churchill*, (Allen and Unwin, 1956).

willingly gave sanction for their inclusion.⁴⁷ Inspiration Films, for example, had gained permission to reproduce one of Churchill's speeches in its production *Cavalcade of the Navy* in 1940. This film met with great success and so the next year Inspiration Films planned to follow it up with another, *New Order*, which was "a vigorous expression of the National War Effort", and intended to include another of Churchill's speeches.⁴⁸ The matter was referred to the MoI which was "reluctant to advise Mr. Churchill to allow Inspiration Pictures to use any part of his broadcast in any of their productions" on the grounds that the Ministry had "not found it a very good organisation".⁴⁹ Permission was accordingly denied by Churchill through his office, which obviously incensed the production company. Horace Shephard, the director, wrote back an impassioned response, politely not demanding to know the reason for the refusal, but speculating that it may have been decided by the "MoI Film Division which [had] so completely failed this nation by its inefficiency, the manner in which it [stifled] individual endeavour and initiative, and its bewildering and incomprehensible testament of the production side of the film industry".⁵⁰ The tirade did nothing to change the situation for Hill minuted on the letter, "the P.M. has read this and does not wish to interfere with the MoI decision".

Around the same time, permission was sought to use Churchill's speech in another film, *Revolt*. Bracken had been approached by Gordon Parry who explained it would be a quality production with the script written by Michael Foot and Frank Owen and would be produced by Alberto Cavalcanti.⁵¹ In the memorandum to Churchill, Bracken mentioned only Owen, perhaps fearing that such a string of left-wing names might instantly provoke a negative response. Bracken asked hopefully if he should "tell them that before you can give permission you will have to delegate someone to see the film" to which Churchill minuted very definitely, "No, he is not a very good fellow".⁵² Bracken, however, must have worked his charm for a few days later he replied to Parry, "the fact that...Mr. Owen and Mr. Foot have co-operated in writing the script of the film entitled *Revolt*, makes the Prime Minister very willing to give you permission to use some passages from his recorded speeches".⁵³

⁴⁷ For Churchill's love of film see D.J. Wenden and K.R.M. Short, "Winston Spencer Churchill: Film Fan" in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, No. 11, 1991, pp. 197-214.

⁴⁸ Horace Shephard to Hill, 7th May 1941, CHAR2/419.

⁴⁹ "E.S.L." from the MoI to Hill 13th May 1941, CHAR2/419.

⁵⁰ Horace Shephard to Hill 30th May 1941, CHAR2/419.

⁵¹ Gordon Parry to Bracken 5th April 1941, CHAR2/418.

⁵² Bracken to Churchill 9th April 1941, CHAR2/418. Churchill's reply written on the same memorandum.

⁵³ Bracken to Parry 18th April 1941, CHAR2/418.

Churchill was less easily persuaded over another film, *Mission to Moscow*, produced in 1943. This was a feature length production investigating the diplomatic relations between America and the Soviet Union during the build up to war. Because of his involvement in the contact between the two countries, the film required a ten minute depiction of Churchill which was to be played by Dudley Field Malone. However, as the *Daily Express* pointed out, the British Board of Film Censors had a ruling that “Neither on screen nor on the stage are living characters allowed to be portrayed” which created a censorship headache for screening in Britain.⁵⁴ To overcome this, the *Express* continued, it had been decided that the film could only be released once Churchill had seen and approved of it. The film was duly released, but without him ever having viewed it. Churchill minuted to Bracken at the MoI, “I have never seen this film. I am told it is very bad. Please issue a contradiction, as I do not wish to be associated with it”.⁵⁵

On a further occasion, Churchill went against the advice of Bracken regarding the production of a film based on his autobiography *My Early Life*. This had been suggested as early as November 1940 by Warner Brothers and was to be undertaken by James Roosevelt, the son of the American President.⁵⁶ It was not pursued until the following April when Bracken took an obvious aversion to the project. He wrote to Churchill:

I do not see how he [Roosevelt] can be prevented from making the film. But I think it should be made clear that you have not seen the script, nor do you approve of the making of this film.

A film of your life which can be advertised as approved by you will of course, make a lot of money for Mr. Roosevelt. Warner Brothers' London representative has asked me whether you would sell the Film Rights to *My Early Life*. He thinks his company would pay anything from 50 to 100 thousand dollars for the right to say that they were producing a film of your life based on your autobiography.

The offer is still open but I do not suppose you would give it any consideration.⁵⁷

Despite Bracken's anticipation of Churchill's refusal, Churchill noted on the bottom of the memorandum, “Brendan, I will gladly sell them”.⁵⁸ Later, Bracken revised his advice

⁵⁴ The ruling of the British Board of Film Censors quoted in *Daily Express* 22nd July 1943.

⁵⁵ Churchill to Bracken, 22nd July 1943, CHAR20/104.

⁵⁶ Mentioned by Jo Fox in “Man of Destiny: Reflections of leadership, Past and Present in British Wartime Films”. Paper given at the “Power, Persuasion and Personality” conference, University of Manchester, June 2002.

⁵⁷ Bracken to Churchill, 10th April 1941, INF1/990.

⁵⁸ The film was never made although *Young Winston*, charting Churchill's early life, was made by Columbia Pictures in 1972.

over the sale of film rights of Churchill's books when Alexander Korda offered £50,000 for the rights to *The English Speaking Peoples*. Churchill agreed with Bracken to sell but with the caveat that there should be "no publicity (especially of the figure) unless approved by Mr. Bracken and *Marlborough* not to conflict with that film".⁵⁹

The dissemination of Churchill's speeches through recordings was less equivocal than through other media. He was approached in July 1940 by the Gramophone Company Ltd, a branch of His Master's Voice, to allow records of his broadcasts to be distributed free to various institutions such as schools, universities and gas companies so that "the timbre, the pauses, the stresses, the words, the courage, in fact, the spell" which could not be reconstructed in the printed version might not be lost.⁶⁰ The production was undertaken without further ado presumably since HMV had previous experience of producing records of the speeches of Baldwin and Chamberlain. The only questions which were raised were what design Churchill preferred on the record sleeve and if he were satisfied with the titles of the speeches.⁶¹ Churchill opted for a photograph of himself and amended "Be Ye Men of Valour" to "In a Solemn Hour".⁶² Further records were made throughout the war of his broadcasts although not of his speeches in the House of Commons.⁶³ Proceeds from the sale of the records went to the Feathers Club, except those from the third LP which went to the Fulmer Chase Hospital, one of Clementine Churchill's charities.⁶⁴

The recognition of the value of Churchill's speeches as propaganda led to a great many requests and suggestions for broadcasts and speeches from various groups and Government departments to advertise some point of policy or to praise a section of the population for their part in the war effort. Other suggestions related to Churchill's

⁵⁹ Hill to Churchill 4th November 1943, CHAR8/699. *Marlborough* was Churchill's book on his famous ancestor.

⁶⁰ Alexander Duckham from the Gramophone Company to Churchill, 27th July 1940, CHAR20/10. The idea of records of the speeches of wartime leaders had first been suggested on the second day of the war with the usual sum of 15 per cent going to charity. Memorandum, 4th September 1939, INF1/670.

⁶¹ Anthony Bevir, Churchill's Private Secretary, to Churchill 30th October 1940, CHAR20/10.

⁶² Churchill's minute, 2nd November 1940, CHAR20/10.

⁶³ Although David Irving and Christopher Hitchens claim that Norman Shelley recorded and broadcast the "Fight on the Beaches" speech on 4th June 1940 whilst masquerading as Churchill, there is no evidence to support this. See appendix to D.J. Wenden, "Churchill, Radio, and Cinema" in Blake and Louis *Churchill*, pp. 215–240. Also "Leading Churchill Myths" *Finest Hour* No. 112, Autumn 2001 and responses to Christopher Hitchens' article "The Medals of His Defeat" (*Atlantic Monthly*, April 2002) in *Atlantic Monthly*, July/August 2002.

⁶⁴ A. Clark of the Gramophone Company to Churchill, 4th April 1943, CHAR20/10. Not a great deal of money was generated by these records which meant either the profit margin was very small or that the records were not so terribly popular. It could also reflect that ownership of gramophones was not so wide, which is more likely than the records being unpopular, as the books of the speeches proved tremendously popular.

rhetorical style and a file was kept of potentially suitable quotations, although most were never used. One which did come to be used in Churchill's first broadcast as Prime Minister was suggested to Churchill's secretary and comes from the Salisbury Anti-Phoner:

Arm yourselves and be ye men of valour, and be in readiness for the conflict; for it is better for us to perish in battle than to look upon the outrage of our nation and our altar. As the Will of God is in Heaven, so let it be.

The quotation was felt to be so perfectly apposite to the situation in May 1940 that Peck was informed that if Churchill did not want to use it, the BBC would do so elsewhere.⁶⁵ Other well meaning people wrote to him with phrases that, to their mind at least, had all the ring of Churchillian rhetoric, for example, the vet who removed a tumour from one of Churchill's cats. The operation caused him to muse on the similarity of the tumour to Nazism and wrote that Churchill might refer to Nazism as "This evil thing – this malignant growth of the modern world". Churchill never did so, publicly at least.⁶⁶ Such suggestions from ordinary members of the public were, however, rare. Most people, it seems, did not presume to be able to equal or better Churchill's rhetoric. Government departments were not included in this paradigm and the Home Office, intending to take some of the burden from Churchill's shoulders, prepared a speech for him which he was to give at a rally of Civilian Defence workers in Hyde Park in July 1941, together with brief notes of what he might say at the luncheon afterwards.⁶⁷ The prepared speech paled in quality of rhetoric at the side of the speech which Churchill wrote himself for the occasion,⁶⁸ although he did accept most of the thematic suggestions for the speech at the luncheon.⁶⁹ However, contrary to his earlier predilection for announcing new developments, he declined to publicize the new Fire Guard which had been set up. Instead, he simply stated that "All arrangements for fire control and fire-watching are being perpetually improved".⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Anonymous memorandum to John Peck, 18th May 1940, CHAR9/176.

⁶⁶ L.P. Pugh to Miss Hamblin, Churchill's secretary, 8th December 1940, CHAR2/397.

⁶⁷ Home Office to Churchill, "Notes for Hyde Park", 12th July 1941, CHAR9/182.

⁶⁸ "Civilians on Parade", Hyde Park, 14th July 1941, Churchill, (edited by Charles Eade), *The Unrelenting Struggle*, (Cassell, 1943) pp. 184-186.

⁶⁹ "Do your worse and we will do our best", County Hall, London, 14th July 1941, Churchill, *The Unrelenting Struggle*, pp. 187-192.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p. 190.

While Churchill was happy to comply with the requests for the contents of his speeches, he did not always respond favourably to suggestions that he make a speech on any particular occasion. Perhaps most famously, Churchill had felt that it was not necessary for him to broadcast after becoming Prime Minister, having just given a stirring speech in the House of Commons, but did follow Chamberlain's advice that he should for the sake of national morale.⁷¹ For similar reasons Duff Cooper, the Minister for Information, urged Churchill to broadcast on the first anniversary of the outbreak of war and to record the same for cinema release.⁷² Churchill, however, did not feel that this was necessary and minuted to Cooper, "I have rather decanted myself on this topic in the H of C".⁷³ A second request a few days later met with the same response, "I think there are other fixtures on that date. I am not yet ready. I spoke in the H of C on the last year".⁷⁴ Requests for a broadcast at Christmas, on St George's Day in 1941 and for a special Anzac broadcast met with similar rejection and he had earlier offered to postpone a dedicated broadcast when he realised there was a proposal to broadcast his speech from the Manchester Free Trade Hall in January 1940.⁷⁵

For the speeches he did make, of which there were many, Churchill appreciated full publicity and on a rare occasion required that the MoI produce a leaflet of a speech he had given in the House of Commons.⁷⁶ Usually though, his private office and the MoI undertook the dissemination of the text to the press and the BBC and arranged for the advertisement of his broadcasts. However, as Rear-Admiral G.P. Thomson, Chief Press Censor for much of the war, remembered this was not an easy task.⁷⁷ Churchill famously kept amending the text until the moment it was delivered and did not even begin to write the "Be Ye Men of Valour" speech until 6pm, when it was to be broadcast

⁷¹ Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, Vol. VI, p. 363.

⁷² Cooper to Churchill, 17th August 1940, PREM4/101/2.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Cooper to Churchill, 27th August 1940, PREM4/101/2.

⁷⁵ Howard to Seal, 14th December 1940, PREM4/70/2. Clinton Baddeley to Churchill's Private Secretary, 31st December 1940, PREM4/70/2. Churchill's refusal to make the broadcast on Christmas Day led to the King being invited to do so which has since become a national tradition. The King later thanked Churchill for his help with his first broadcast. The King to Churchill, 2nd January 1941, CHAR20/20. Telephone Conversation, 19th January 1940, RCONT, File 2, BBC Written Archives Centre.

⁷⁶ "The War: Past and Future", 21st September 1943, House of Commons, *Onwards to Victory*, pp. 190-216. The MoI, however, declined on the grounds that there was no demand as the newspapers and the BBC had already given it full publicity and all MPs had a copy in *Hansard*. There is no explanation why this speech should be treated differently to any of the other major speeches.

⁷⁷ G. P. Thomson "Churchill and the Censorship" in Charles Eade (Ed.) *Churchill By His Contemporaries*, (The Reprint Society, 1955) pp. 144-149.

just three hours later.⁷⁸ Naturally, the newspapers wanted to include the speeches in the next day's press, together with elucidating editorial comment, a process which was made difficult by Churchill's work habits. The speed with which editors had to work, of course, led to mistakes on occasion and before he would allow a leaflet to be printed of his "Give us the Tools" broadcast he insisted on correcting a proof, writing that, "There were several foolish mistakes in the TIMES report".⁷⁹ In an attempt to appease the press and remedy the situation, from 1942 Churchill's private office endeavoured to give the text of a speech to the MoI by 6pm so that it could be given to the press. "It would, of course", Churchill's secretary explained, "be made clear that the broadcast as delivered constituted the final text".⁸⁰

Churchill's practice of not completing his broadcasts until the eleventh hour also caused problems for the BBC, especially over his broadcast concerning the invasion of Russia. The broadcast was "not ready till twenty minutes before he was due to deliver it" and, as such, no-one had time to vet it, least of all Eden who, as Foreign Secretary, had the keenest interest to do so.⁸¹ In the next news bulletin the BBC summarised the speech but in doing so misrepresented Churchill's words over his seeming about face on Communism. As a result of the difficulties this caused, it was agreed that summaries be supplied by Churchill's private office within three hours of the broadcast and that the BBC should broadcast nothing regarding the speech in the meantime.⁸² To avoid similar problems with the press and the BBC regarding Churchill's important broadcast on post-war reconstruction in March 1943, Bracken wrote to Churchill: "I beg you to let us have a script as early as possible in advance so that all the editions of Monday morning's newspapers will have a chance to cover it fully and so that editors will have plenty of time in which to prepare their comments", to which Churchill agreed.⁸³

In addition to publicity through the printed media, Churchill's speeches also had the potential to be recorded. In June 1940, Churchill proposed a speech in the House of Commons which was to be followed by a broadcast "specially addressed to America".⁸⁴ To save him the trouble of delivering two speeches on the same day Duff Cooper suggested that he either broadcast directly from the House of Commons or be recorded

⁷⁸ John Colville, *The Fringes of Power*, (Hodder and Staughton, 1985), 19th May 1940, p. 136.

Hereafter Colville diary.

⁷⁹ Churchill to Private Office, 17th February 1941, CHAR9/191.

⁸⁰ T.L. Rowan to Churchill, 14th February 1942, CHAR9/188.

⁸¹ Colville diary 22nd June 1941, p. 405.

⁸² Steward, of the BBC, to John Martin, Churchill's secretary, 27th June 1941, PREM4/70/2.

⁸³ Bracken to Churchill, 18th March 1943, CHAR9/198.

⁸⁴ Minutes of the MoI Policy Committee, 17th June 1940, INF1/849.

and the speech relayed afterwards. Churchill was, at first, “much opposed to the idea” although when pushed, “appeared to be ready to consider it further”.⁸⁵ The situation was felt to be so important, France being on the verge of capitulation to the Germans, that “great efforts should be made to overcome objections”.⁸⁶ Since broadcasting directly from the Chamber was strictly against Parliamentary procedure, permission had to be sought from the Speaker of the House, who found no objection. Captain Margesson, Chief Tory Whip, however, did raise objections and Churchill retracted any earlier interest and so the matter was dropped.⁸⁷ It was only eighteen months later that any great interest in the subject was revived. By this time, Russia had been in the war for seven months and Japan had just made its attacks in the Far East, bringing in a new ally and a new enemy. Churchill immediately left for America to discuss with Roosevelt the implications this had for the combined war effort. During his time away, in a complete reversal of his stance in 1940, Churchill petitioned the War Cabinet to allow the broadcast of the statement he proposed to make in the House upon his return. It would, he telegraphed, allow him “to avoid the burden of my not having to deliver the speech again on the 9 o’clock broadcast”.⁸⁸ The suggestion raised a great number of objections from both the House and the Cabinet. One problem was that it would be difficult to filter or remove objections and comments from other MPs and another that it would open the floodgates for other Parliamentary proceedings to be broadcast. The *Daily Herald* added that Churchill ought to remember that he was also the leader of the Conservative Party and that “national unity cannot be expressed solely by a Premier who is also party chief...We should merely damage our unity if Parliament were represented as the voice of one man with whom, on certain issues, many still disagree”.⁸⁹ In the end, Churchill withdrew his motion, and in doing so, wrote Henry Channon, he “acted wisely”.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Minutes of the MoI Policy Committee, 25th June 1940, INF1/849. There was a brief suggestion to record and broadcast what became the ‘Few’ speech in August 1940, but again the matter was dropped. Wellington (of the MoI) to Director General of the BBC, 16th August 1940, RCONT, File 2.

⁸⁸ Churchill to Attlee telegram, 11th January 1942, CAB120/29.

⁸⁹ *Daily Herald* 22nd January 1942.

⁹⁰ Robert Rhodes James, (ed.) *Chips: the Diaries of Sir Henry Channon*. (Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1967) 22nd January 1942, p. 318. (Hereafter Channon diary). Despite it having been thrown out of Parliament, the MoI persisted in its attempts to have the speeches broadcast. It was felt “the time was most propitious” and that “the Prime Minister’s speeches are first class propaganda material” (Minutes of the Executive Board, 31st January 1942, INF1/73) suggesting that Churchill was not quite so unpopular as is often thought at this time.

The public might have been disappointed by the rejection of the proposal,⁹¹ but they were hardly disadvantaged by the decision; there were still plenty of opportunities for people to access Churchill's speeches. In addition to the various leaflets, pamphlets and gramophone records, in February 1941 Churchill published the first volume of his wartime speeches. This followed an earlier tradition, for his pre-war speeches had also been rendered into book form in *Liberalism and the Social Problem*, *India*, *The Arms and the Covenant*, and *Step by Step*. Churchill sold the world rights of *Into Battle*, the first volume of wartime speeches, to Cassell in late 1940 for £600 with an agreement to take 25 per cent royalties on full priced editions and 10 per cent on cheaper versions. Revealing their obvious popularity, 30,000 copies were printed in the first run in the UK and 20,000 in the second run in the same month.⁹² By June 1942 the volume had generated £12,372 3s. 9d. in royalties.⁹³ Churchill's son, Randolph, had compiled the speeches for the book and would have undoubtedly done the same for further volumes had he not joined the services and been called away. To fill the gap, Charles Eade stepped forward and volunteered his services. "Such a work", he explained, "is good propaganda for this country's war effort and I am sure many people would look forward to the next book of the Prime Minister's speeches".⁹⁴ The matter was obviously passed on to Churchill's Parliamentary Secretary as it was written on the top of the letter, "Mr. Bracken sees no objection" and presumably neither did Churchill, for Eade went on to edit the next five volumes.

Taking into account Churchill's attitude towards the proposed books, films, speeches and general veneration, it is hard to think of Churchill as a committed self-publicist. It may be true that when faced with a newsreel crew or a press photographer that he played up to the occasion, but this qualifies him more as an exhibitionist than a self-publicist. To be a self-publicist implies that one is self-seeking and aims only to promote oneself in the public eye; this could hardly be said of Churchill. He may have written articles in the press during the 1930s but these were to bring attention to his cause rather than himself and during the war he was too busy with its direction to seek notoriety personally; this came naturally as a result of his position. He had many opportunities through film, print and portraiture to have himself publicised still further

⁹¹ Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 19th-25th January 1942, INF1/292.

⁹² Putnams, the American publisher, had its own quota and published the volume under the – incorrectly quoted – title *Blood, Sweat and Tears*. This phrase has entered even the British public memory more deeply than the correct quote, "blood, toil, tears and sweat".

⁹³ All figures from CHAR8/803.

⁹⁴ Eade to Hill, 7th May 1941, CHAR8/804.

but on many occasions refused to do so. Although the documents do not reveal Churchill's reasoning behind these refusals, a pattern emerges that he objected to that which was in poor taste, for example *Mission to Moscow*, and that which might swamp either himself in work or the public in excessive publicity, for example his refusal to speak in the House of Commons as well as broadcast on the anniversary of the outbreak of war. Perhaps the most compelling reason, however, was his attempt to control the integrity of his own work. Allowing unrestricted reproduction of his books and speeches might have jeopardised its probity and run the risk of him being misquoted and misrepresented. Some might add that it would also have reduced his own personal profit.

Instead of Churchill taking personal responsibility for his own publicity, what does emerge is how central a role both Brendan Bracken and the MoI played in promoting Churchill. Long before Bracken became Minister of Information, Churchill referred matters of publicity to him and external bodies, such as the film companies, approached Bracken directly to ask his approval of their particular proposal. It was more often than not that Bracken, a strict guardian of his master's reputation and also widely regarded by his contemporaries as a man of impeccable taste, advocated Churchill give permission to whatever venture was in hand; any accusations of excessive publicity, therefore, should be levelled at Bracken rather than Churchill. In fact, such was Bracken's reputation for promoting Churchill that when Hore-Belisha heard of Bracken's promotion to the MoI in July 1941 he bemoaned that "whereas now the MoI mentioned the PM one thousand times, it would now mention him two thousand times in the future."⁹⁵ The combined forces of the MoI and Brendan Bracken were indeed formidable but prior to July 1941 both he and the MoI also achieved a great deal independently, in the formative years of the Legend.

Bracken and the Press

Brendan Bracken's relationship with Churchill had spanned many years and he had been Churchill's ardent supporter during Churchill's locust years, earning him the sobriquet "Churchill's faithful chela".⁹⁶ During this time he had arranged for Churchill's articles on

⁹⁵ Hore-Belisha in Crozier, *Off the Record*, p. 227.

⁹⁶ Baldwin used this Hindustani word, meaning a person whose status lies between that of slave and disciple. Cited in Charles Lysaght, *Brendan Bracken*, (Allen Lane, 1979), p. 131.

rearmament and appeasement to be printed in America and had been one of the only two other Conservatives to vote for the Labour initiative to establish a Ministry of Supply in the wake of the Munich agreement.⁹⁷ Besides having been a politician since 1929, Bracken was also very much involved in the world of newspapers, first as a journalist for the *Empire Review* and later as editor of the *Illustrated Review*. He also sat on the board of the publishing firm Eyre and Spottiswood, bought the *Financial News* in 1928, and later the controlling interest of the *Economist*, the *Investors' Chronicle*, the *Liverpool Journal of Commerce, Practitioner*, and set up the periodical *Banker*.⁹⁸ Given such contacts it is not perhaps surprising that Churchill should entrust him with the maintenance of his public image and refer most – if not all – matters of publicity to Bracken.⁹⁹

From the outbreak of war until July 1941 Bracken officially served as Churchill's Parliamentary Private Secretary and, as has been seen, did much to control Churchill's image. One of his concerns, shared by Churchill, regarded the veracity of the reports of Churchill's speeches and attempted to ensure that Churchill would not be seen as a boastful liar. Bracken wrote to the *Sunday Pictorial* complaining that the newspaper had misrepresented Churchill, when it had reported that he had boasted that he would see all the ships in the Skaggerak sunk and the same was sent by Churchill's secretary to the *Daily Herald*.¹⁰⁰ What Churchill had actually said was "all German ships in the Skaggerak will be sunk...as opportunity serves", altering the certainty of the claim somewhat.¹⁰¹ It seems that word spread through the press' grapevine for the next day in an attempt to decry its competition the *Daily Express* duly pointed out:

certain newspapers are directing their attack [for lack of successes] on Churchill. They blame him for 'promising' to sink all the ships in the Skaggerak and Kattegat. Churchill made no such promise. His words were taken out of their context. He merely explained that our submarines had been given full liberty of action to sink all German ships by day and night.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ *Hansard*, vol. 341, col. 1210.

⁹⁸ See the biographies of Bracken by Lysaght and Boyle, *Poor, Dear Brendan*.

⁹⁹ Given the closeness of the relationship, Churchill and Bracken often dined together and as such much of their business would have been conducted verbally. This, compounded with the destruction of Bracken's papers makes it difficult to identify exactly where Bracken did have a profound influence.

¹⁰⁰ Bracken to Hugh Cudlipp, 28th April 1940, CHAR2/398. Kathleen Hill to Percy Cudlipp, 27th April 1940, CHAR2/393.

¹⁰¹ "Norway", speech in the House of Commons, 11th April 1940, Churchill, *Into Battle*, p. 196.

¹⁰² *Daily Express*, 29th April 1940.

For those who were familiar with Churchill's office, Bracken was the first point of contact for people who wished to use either Churchill's image or else his speeches in their particular project; he was indeed, "the man at the Prime Minister's elbow much sought after by all who wished to circumvent officialdom".¹⁰³ It was partly on account of this privileged position that he was reluctant to accept the position of Minister of Information when it was offered to him in 1941 as he would lose such direct access to Churchill. Nevertheless, he accepted the post with Beaverbrook's express approval and implicit assurances of help.¹⁰⁴ Churchill also pledged that "the full support and authority of the Prime Minister would be at [his] disposal for even the harshest decisions",¹⁰⁵ something which had been denied previous Ministers for Information.¹⁰⁶

Bracken's talent for the post had long been recognised and Leslie Hoare, supported by Churchill, had suggested his name for Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of Information in September 1939, knowing that the MoI would come under a great deal of criticism and believing Bracken had the qualities to overcome it but instead Bracken became Churchill's Parliamentary Private Secretary.¹⁰⁷ This did not mean, however, that he ignored the concept of governmental publicity. On the contrary, Bracken was supportive of Reith in his role as Minister, against the tide of political opinion. Reith recorded that Bracken was "very outspoken to Churchill about me and my job, saying that it was all wrong that I should be as I am" (that is, without a seat on the Cabinet) and presumably suggested ways in which Reith's position could be bettered.¹⁰⁸ Churchill agreed that the Minister for Information should sit on the Cabinet and be fully aware of all that was happening in the Government and when he became Prime Minister empowered Duff Cooper, as the new Minister of Information, to do just that. Bracken, too, appreciated the value of the Ministry, unlike many of his contemporaries, and in November 1939 approached the *Daily Express* to "stir up" criticism of it so that Chamberlain "would realise the folly of retaining an ossific Ministry of Information which neglects our vital interests and disillusiones our friends in all parts

¹⁰³ Francis Williams, "Brendan Bracken: the Good Companion" in *Public Opinion*, 27th April 1951.

¹⁰⁴ Beaverbrook to Bracken, 21st July 1941, and Bracken to Beaverbrook 29th July 1941, Beaverbrook Papers, House of Lords, BBK/C/56. For more on the relationship of Beaverbrook and Bracken see Richard Cockett, *My Dear Max*, (The Historians' Press, 1990).

¹⁰⁵ Churchill to Bracken quoted in Boyle, *Poor, Dear Brendan*, p. 265.

¹⁰⁶ Reith, for example, complained that Churchill did "everything for [Duff Cooper] which Chamberlain would not do" for him (Reith diary, 12th May 1940, p. 253) yet Duff Cooper also carped, "when I appealed for support to the Prime Minister [Churchill] I seldom got it". (Cooper, *Old Men Forget*, p. 288.)

¹⁰⁷ Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, Vol. VI*, p. 27.

¹⁰⁸ Reith diary, 10th April 1940, p. 245

of the world” and thereby improve it.¹⁰⁹ The *Daily Express* did indeed take up the challenge and launched a critical campaign against the MoI, together with the other newspapers. Such was the level of outrage at the MoI’s incompetence that even the number of teaspoons reputedly lost by the Ministry became a national scandal.¹¹⁰

But while the press were busy denigrating the MoI itself, they were gradually building up a favourable image of Churchill. During the honeymoon period of the war whilst Churchill was still at the Admiralty, very little criticism was directed at him personally. There were occasions such as when he announced that Canadian troops had landed in Britain when the press’ ire was raised, but this was soon pacified as there were plenty of other targets upon whom spleen could be vented. Especially pro-Churchillian at this time were the two highest selling daily newspapers in the country, the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mirror*, together with the periodical the *Picture Post*, which had a weekly circulation of five million.¹¹¹ Both the *Mirror* and *Post* had long supported Churchill in his stance against appeasement and the *Mirror* frequently reminded its readers of the fact that it had carried Churchill’s articles in the 1930s which advocated a more aggressive stance against Germany.¹¹² In doing this the foundations were laid upon which the Myth would be built of how Churchill single-handedly opposed appeasement. Churchill would come to develop this more fully in the post-war period in his war memoirs, but during 1940 at least it helped to deflect some of the criticisms levelled at many members of the Government concerning Britain’s lack of preparedness.

The sensationalist style of these three newspapers was accompanied by an almost infantile sense of patriotism, especially during the twilight war. The general lack of news from the war meant that a disproportionate level of attention was paid to the activities of the Navy and therewith to Churchill. Edward Hulton, proprietor of the *Picture Post*, offered to extend coverage, putting the case of the Government and the Admiralty to the

¹⁰⁹ Bracken to Beaverbrook, 20th November 1939 quoted in Cockett, *My Dear Max*, p. 49.

¹¹⁰ *Daily Express*, 7th February 1940. In the first five months of war, the Ministry lost 1,132 teaspoons, clearly an unacceptable number.

¹¹¹ Daily circulation figures during the war were roughly: *Daily Express* 2,700,00, *Daily Mirror* 1,900,000, *Daily Herald* 1,600,000, *Daily Mail* 1,450,000, *News Chronicle* 1,200,000, *Daily Sketch* 700,000, *Daily Telegraph* 650,000, *Times* 180,000. Sunday newspaper figures were *News of the World* 4,500,000, *People* 3,500,000, *Sunday Pictorial* 1,900,000, *Sunday Express* 1,700,000, *Empire News* 1,400,000, *Sunday Dispatch* 950,000, *Sunday Chronicle* 950,000, *Sunday Graphic* 700,000, *Reynolds’ News* 500,000, *Sunday Times* 350,000, *Observer* 200,000. Figures in letter from Cecil King to Lady Cripps 18th April 1942, quoted in Cecil King, *With Malice Towards None: A War Diary* (1970) pp. 311-313. Hereafter King diary. See Appendix 5.

¹¹² The *Express*, by contrast, had launched a campaign to discredit Churchill in the later 1930s on account of his opposition to appeasement. Once war had broken out its stance was completely reversed and the newspaper pursued a blatantly pro-Churchill, even Churchill-apologist line.

public, but no specific mention was made of the other services.¹¹³ On this occasion Bracken refused on the grounds that Churchill was too busy to pose for photographs or devote time to an interview.¹¹⁴ Similar reticence was not shown, however, when Hulton proposed an exposé of the new Government in May. He thought it would be “an extremely helpful send off” and asked only that the MoI grant an extra quota of paper and pay £3,900 towards its cost; printing costs would be paid by himself.¹¹⁵ The supplement was duly published and gave a very favourable line up of all the members of the Government, especially, of course, Churchill.¹¹⁶

The positive coverage of Churchill in the *Picture Post* was perhaps hardly surprising given that Churchill was “friendly disposed towards Mr. Hulton”, who was a regular visitor to Chartwell.¹¹⁷ Other personal contacts amongst persons of the press included Lord Camrose, the proprietor of the *Daily Telegraph* who in turn occasionally influenced his brother Lord Kemsley, proprietor of the *Daily Sketch*, the *Sunday Graphic* and *Sunday Times*, and of course Lord Beaverbrook, proprietor of the *Daily Express*, *Sunday Express* and the *Evening Standard*. It is a matter of debate how great an influence the proprietors had on their newspapers, for what was publicly declared and what happened in reality were often very different.¹¹⁸ Beaverbrook, for example, insisted that he had no control over his press, that it would be unfitting for a member of the Government to do so, and yet, “often a friend would telephone him in a rage at having been attacked or caricatured; Beaverbrook’s answer was always the same: ‘I have no control over my newspapers’...a minute later he would be on the telephone to one of his editors telling him what was wrong with that morning’s issue”.¹¹⁹ Kemsley too, even though he was not on the best of terms with Churchill, especially later in the war, could also be persuaded to suppress anti-Churchill articles.¹²⁰ Churchill also had links with Sir Walter Layton, editor of the *News Chronicle* through the Anti-Nazi Council meetings in the later 1930s. Bracken, too, knew Layton as he had been editor of his newspaper, the *Economist*. Occasionally, Churchill met with W.P. Crozier, editor of the *Manchester*

¹¹³ Hulton to Churchill, 15th January 1940, CHAR2/400.

¹¹⁴ Bracken to Hulton, 16th January 1940, CHAR2/400.

¹¹⁵ Memo from “DS”, 14th May 1940 and Minutes of the Policy Committee, 15th May 1940, INF1/848.

¹¹⁶ *Picture Post*, 1st June 1940.

¹¹⁷ Hill to Bernard Sendall at the MoI, 6th February 1940, CHAR2/393.

¹¹⁸ For a very illuminating document on the control of British newspapers see Appendix 5. See also Mass-Observation File Report (hereafter MO FR) 126, *A Report on the Press*, May 1940.

¹¹⁹ *Daily Telegraph* 26th June 1972 quoted in Timothy Benson, *Low and Beaverbrook: the Case of a Cartoonist’s Autonomy*, PhD thesis, 1998, University of Kent. It is also striking that the *Daily Express* should be the most passionately pro-Churchill newspaper throughout the war.

¹²⁰ Channon diary, 4th February 1942, p. 320.

Guardian,¹²¹ Barrington-Ward, editor of *The Times* and Lord Rothermere, the chairman of the Newspaper Proprietors' Association and owner of the *Daily Mail* and *Evening News*.¹²² It is perhaps on account of these contacts that Churchill felt no need for a weekly press conference as was conducted by Roosevelt, although it was urged that he hold such meetings occasionally to sweeten the newspapers' attitudes as "a coalition Government cannot rely as a Party Government can on a party press to rally support when it...is attacked".¹²³ This Churchill did four times throughout the war but these were only at times of crisis, such as the retreat from Greece and Crete in April and May 1941, and they served as instructive interviews on Government policy rather than any attempt to dominate the release of news or promote himself; more frequently the press conferences were conducted by Brendan Bracken when at the MoI or else the Ministers directly responsible for the problem in hand.¹²⁴ Although it is too much to claim that Churchill had the unequivocal support of the majority of the press through these contacts, it is striking to note that the newspaper which caused greatest grievance was the *Daily Mirror*, which had no such single figure in control.¹²⁵

During the first month or so of Churchill's premiership the press were largely in favour of the coalition Government but as the summer wore on, criticism in the press, especially in the *Mirror*, became increasingly vocal. Although it was largely levelled specifically at the Government in general rather than at the Prime Minister, Churchill took the criticisms personally. Presaging what was to follow later in the war, in October 1940 Churchill attacked those newspapers which had been severely critical of the Dakar incident. While he said he welcomed comments that were "well meant and well-informed and searching" he deprecated that there was "a tone in certain organs of the Press...a tone not only in the Dakar episode but in other and more important issues, that is so vicious and malignant that it would be almost indecent if applied to the enemy".¹²⁶ The *Daily Herald* was not alone in taking exception to the speech and defended itself and other newspapers from the charge: "Neither in tone nor intention were [the *Daily Herald*'s] remarks 'vicious and malignant'. Nor indeed can those adjectives be applied to

¹²¹ The meetings are documented in Crozier, *Off the Record*.

¹²² Rothermere was, however, generally "anti-Winston". Harold Nicolson (edited by Nigel Nicolson), *Diaries and Letters, 1939-1945*, (Collins, 1967), 2nd July 1942, p. 238.

¹²³ J.A. Spender to Churchill, 18th June 1941, CHAR20/29. Although Churchill had a press secretary, Sir Fife Clark, his name does not appear in any of the documents consulted, suggesting either that his contact with Churchill was verbal only or else very limited, or that his role was eclipsed by Bracken.

¹²⁴ For more on Churchill's dictatorial relationship with the press see James Margach, *The Abuse of Power*, (W.H. Allen, 1978).

¹²⁵ It was estimated that it would take a sum of fifty shareholders to simulate a controlling interest.

¹²⁶ War situation speech, House of Commons, 8th October 1940, Churchill, *Into Battle*, pp. 276-291.

any responsible organ of the British press at any stage in the war.”¹²⁷ The *Mirror* was similarly unimpressed by his speech.¹²⁸ Its sister paper, the *Sunday Pictorial*, was particularly damning and carried an article, the import of which was that “in his recent charges Churchill had shown the same dilatory, short-sighted, party-serving spirit as Chamberlain” and it ended with a quote from Churchill’s book *The World Crisis*, “there is no place for compromise in war...Clear leadership, violent action, rigid decisions one way or the other form the only path, not only of victory but of safety and even mercy”.¹²⁹ The *Pictorial*’s comments caused considerable consternation in the Cabinet and a deputation went to see Attlee the next day. Attlee explained that if such irresponsible criticism of the Government continued, the Government would be forced to introduce censorship of opinion as well as of news, but was rather vague on quite what constituted irresponsible criticism as opposed to constructive. To try to clarify the matter the two editorial directors of the *Mirror* and *Pictorial*, Cecil King and Harry Bartholomew, returned to Attlee. They concluded that “the fuss was really Churchill’s”, that it was “the quotation from his own book that really annoyed Winston and caused all the trouble” and that “he must be infuriated to be condemned out of his own mouth”.¹³⁰ Wallace Roome, general manager of the *Mirror*, also voiced the same opinion.¹³¹

This attitude reflects what was mentioned in the previous section, that Churchill was sensitive to irresponsible use of his own works. In addition, he was also resentful of criticisms of his Government. It was this which instigated the first meeting between him and King in June 1940 when the *Mirror*, among others, had demanded the Municheers be removed from the Government. Churchill saw to it personally that the principal dailies cease their criticism of Chamberlain and his followers. Beaverbrook was informed that the “*Daily Mirror* and *Sunday Pictorial* have agreed to hold off”¹³² and King recorded that Churchill “fixed” the *Daily Herald* through Bevin and the *News Chronicle* through Walter Layton and Lloyd George;¹³³ Beaverbrook scarcely needed to ‘fix’ his own newspapers, as they had always been in favour of the policy of appeasement.

A later collision between Churchill and the *Mirror* also revealed the extent to which Churchill would go to defend his Government and his own reputation. Two

¹²⁷ *Daily Herald*, 9th October 1940. See also Chapter 2.

¹²⁸ *Daily Mirror*, 9th October 1940.

¹²⁹ Hugh Cudlipp, *Publish and Be Damned*, (Andrew Dakars, 1953) p. 147.

¹³⁰ But rather than damning Churchill with his own words, it is possible to see that the passage demonstrates Churchill’s constancy and leadership abilities.

¹³¹ King diary, 12th October 1940, pp. 83 and 84.

¹³² Letter (illegible signature) to Beaverbrook, 6th June 1940, CHAR20/1.

¹³³ King diary, 7th June 1940, p. 48.

articles had appeared in the *Mirror* which were aimed at denigrating the abilities of Eden, Anderson, Butler and Wood, but which also accused Churchill of only giving high office to those who had served him.¹³⁴ At first, there was simply a gentle reprimand from Churchill's secretary to King, but King remonstrated against the rebuke and explained that the articles had merely been a repetition of an article that had appeared in *Life*, that in the *Mirror* it had been labelled "apocryphal" and that the same story had appeared in other newspapers.¹³⁵ Churchill replied personally and more vitriolically:

First, there is a spirit of hatred and malice against the Government, which after all is not a Party Government but National Government almost unanimously chosen, which spirit surpasses anything I have ever seen in English journalism. One would have thought in these hard times that some hatred might be kept for the enemy.

The second point is more general. Much the most effective way in which to conduct a Fifth Column movement at the present time would be the method followed by the DAILY MIRROR and SUNDAY PICTORIAL. Lip service would no doubt be paid to the Prime Minister, whose position at the moment may be difficult to undermine. A perfervid zeal for intensification of the war effort would be used as a cloak behind which to insult and discredit one Minister after another. Every grievance would be exploited to the full, especially those grievances which lead to class dissension. The Army system and discipline would be attacked. The unity between the Conservative and Labour Parties would be gnawed at. The attempt would be made persistently to represent the Government as feeble, unworthy and incompetent, and to spread a general sense of distrust in the whole system. Thus large numbers of readers would be brought into a state of despondency and resentment, of bitterness and scorn, which at the moment...could be suddenly switched over into naked defeatism, and a demand for a negotiated peace.¹³⁶

March 1942, however, saw the strongest rebuke of the *Mirror* over a cartoon by Philip Zec which depicted a shipwrecked sailor with the caption "the price of petrol has been increased by one penny – official" (Figure 11).¹³⁷ The Government took it as a criticism that increased prices were simply to enhance profits for private companies and its displeasure resulted in a threat to close down the *Mirror* and its sister paper the *Sunday Pictorial*. Of course, the threat induced violent protestations from the *Mirror* which

¹³⁴ The articles appeared in the *Daily Mirror*, 1st January 1941.

¹³⁵ Hill to King, 23rd January 1941 and King to Churchill, 24th January 1941 in King diary, pp. 94-96.

¹³⁶ Churchill to King, *Ibid.*, 27th January 1941, pp. 97-98.

¹³⁷ For more on this see Maurice Edelman, *The Mirror: a Political History*, (Hamish Hamilton, 1966), pp. 113-130.



Figure 11 *Daily Mirror* 6th March 1942

claimed that the intention was to stop people wasting petrol and came in a series of cartoons that had had similar objectives, encouraging frugality in the use of electricity, gas and coal. It seems that the Zec cartoon was merely an excuse to threaten the ban as the *Mirror* and *Pictorial* had been courting such action for some time. Their attacks on bureaucracy, the Army and certain members of the Government had generated resentment almost throughout the war but had been particularly irksome since the beginning of 1942. The loss of the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse* and the fall of Singapore naturally raised questions about the efficacy of the military leadership and the Vote of Confidence at the end of January created widespread political comment. One article in the *Sunday Pictorial* asked, “have we the wrong Prime Minister? Last week I would have hesitated a little and said ‘no’. Today I say that unless the Prime Minister acts, the answer will be ‘yes’”.¹³⁸ Churchill was said to be in a “towering passion...over the criticisms of his administration” and that he “hated the newspapers worse than the Nazis”.¹³⁹ When the ban of the *Mirror* was under consideration in the House, Churchill kept out of the debate and left it to Morrison, as Home Secretary on whose authority the

¹³⁸ *Sunday Pictorial* quoted in Edelman, *The Mirror*, p. 109.

¹³⁹ Archibald Sinclair quoted in King diary, 19th February 1942, p. 160.

ban would be imposed, to argue the Government's case. Nevertheless, this episode and earlier ones are very illuminating of Churchill's attitude to the press and to publicity.

It seems that in no way did he view criticism either of himself or members of his Government as a threat to his own political position. But besides demonstrating Churchill's own loyalty to his ministers, the only concern he expressed was the effect it might have on public morale and the consequent detriment this would have on the war effort. Once again, this betrays his single-minded pursuit of victory but it also shows a contradictory view of the press. On the one hand he knew of its importance in maintaining a healthy public opinion yet he did very little to cultivate favourable press coverage. The few occasions when he did hold press conferences were at the behest of his advisors, notably Bracken and Beaverbrook, or else he granted interviews to individual editors and senior journalists upon their application for an appointment. Contact with proprietors was maintained on a more social level, inviting them to lunch or dinner as opposed to an interview in the Cabinet rooms or at Downing Street. The effect of these contacts could only have had a positive outcome in the short-term at the very least. But it was the *Daily Express* which contributed most to the Churchill Legend.

Churchill's close contact with Beaverbrook and the almost sycophantic coverage he received in the *Express* newspapers can hardly have been coincidental. Bracken's close links with the press and Beaverbrook also suggests some consanguineous partisanship. The adulation of Churchill in the *Express* typifies much more closely the popular memory of the war as it developed from around 1941, for it reinforced notions of unity and accord, whereas voices of dissent, such as that of the *Mirror*, have largely been forgotten. However, the *Daily Express* alone cannot be held responsible for the development of the Churchill Legend and help was quite clearly to be found in other quarters, notably the MoI.

The Ministry of Information

As mentioned in the previous section, one of the tasks which the MoI undertook was the dissemination of Churchill's speeches. It co-ordinated the release of the text to the press with help from Churchill's private office and made arrangements with the BBC to advertise any forthcoming broadcasts. In doing this, it was inarguably fulfilling one of its

legitimate functions in controlling and providing the news.¹⁴⁰ In addition it undertook to provide further publicity of Churchill's speeches through different media. A great deal of this was for foreign propaganda, especially for the neutral countries of the Iberian peninsula and South America, but much was also aimed at the Home Front. Subscribing to the 'man of action' image, the MoI's first pamphlet of Churchill's speeches was entitled *Winston Churchill's Fighting Speeches*.¹⁴¹ The General Division of the MoI, whose brainchild it was, hoped that it might be published for the affordable sum of 6^d and also put forward a proposal for a précis of Churchill's lengthy treatise on the First World War, *The World Crisis*.¹⁴² However, such publications proved a costly exercise for the MoI and it was agreed that from February 1941 the *Radio Times* would take on the task of reproducing ministerial broadcasts, printing an extra four pages three or four times a year from its own paper supply. This would be charged at the flat fee of £600 a time but it was estimated that this was still £400 less than if the MoI published the same. It also had the added advantages of being much quicker and of already having an established readership. The MoI, however, added the caveat that, "the *Radio Times* should be asked to make some reference on the cover to the feature, and to consider printing it as an insert in the middle of the paper so that it could easily be taken out".¹⁴³ Churchill's "Give us the Tools" broadcast of 9th February 1941 was the first speech to be reproduced in this way.

Parts of Churchill's speeches were also reproduced in poster form for display on the one and a half million poster sites available to the MoI.¹⁴⁴ The poster was felt to be a particularly useful means of communication as its production and dissemination could be undertaken quickly, making their contents relevant and topical. The first posters betrayed the MoI's obsession with the maintenance of morale, one of its other principal functions, and resorted on most occasions to encouragement and exhortation. Within this series was the infamous first poster of the war, "your courage, your cheerfulness,

¹⁴⁰ Sir Kenneth Clark, head of the Films Division in the early part of the war facetiously, but perhaps accurately, wrote that the Ministry had four functions: "The first and most defensible, was censorship; the second the provision of news; the third a feeble attempt at propaganda through various media; and the fourth to provide a kind of wastepaper basket into which everyone could throw their grievances and their winning proposals". Clark, *The Other Half*, pp. 9-10. The more serious functions of the Ministry will be explored more fully later in the section.

¹⁴¹ Policy Committee Meeting Minutes, 18th April 1940, INF1/848.

¹⁴² Under the same point in the minutes it also proposed a booklet on the Battle of the River Plate, indicating the axiomatic relationship of Churchill and the Navy in the minds of those who sat on the committee.

¹⁴³ Minutes of the Home Publicity Committee, 10th February 1941, INF1/249.

¹⁴⁴ Minute from "G.P.P." to Aynsley in the Establishments Division, no date but early 1941, INF1/86.

your resolution will bring us victory”.¹⁴⁵ Also contained within this series was a little known poster of Churchill’s speech given at the Manchester Free Trade Hall in January 1940 (Figure 12) wherein part of the text is displayed, surrounded by a naval purfle.¹⁴⁶ The words are taken from the closing paragraph of the speech and are axiomatic to the line of propaganda being pursued by the MoI at the time. They urged speed and industry as well as fortitude and unity, but while they might have worked for Churchill in Manchester, they rather fail as a poster being far too verbose to have any effect on the casual passerby.

As the war progressed, the MoI learnt many lessons including that of how to communicate with the public. Posters became less wordy and had a greater visual impact.¹⁴⁷ But perhaps the most important lesson learned was why the first posters had

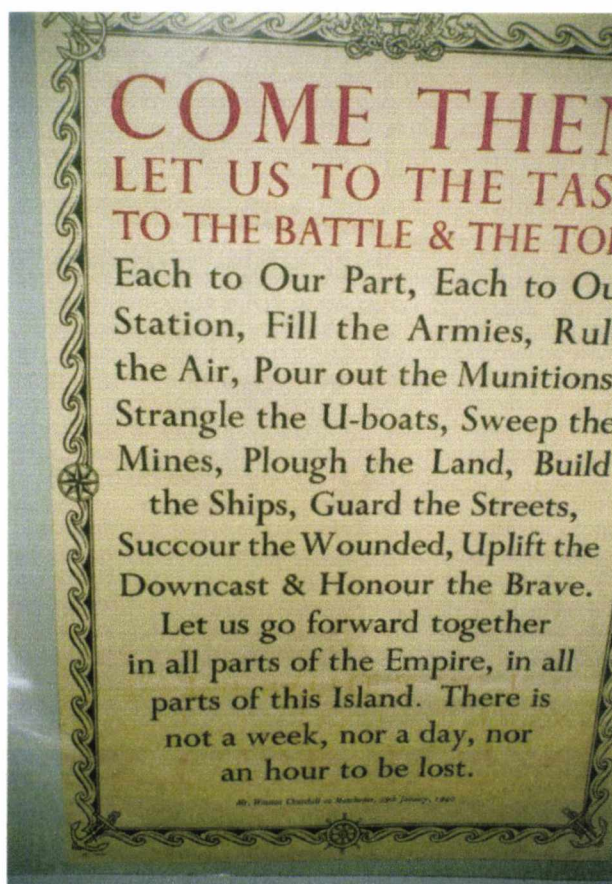


Figure 12 MoI poster

¹⁴⁵ This poster was much lampooned at the time, for example, *The Times* famously called the MoI’s efforts “egregious and unnecessary” and “patronising and insipid invocations”. 23rd September 1939.

¹⁴⁶ “A Time to Dare and Endure”, 27th January 1940, Churchill, *Into Battle*, pp. 163-169.

¹⁴⁷ See Anthony Rhodes, *Propaganda: the art of persuasion*, (Chelsea House, 1983), Marion Yass, *This is Your War*, (HMSO, 1983) and J.D. Cantwell, *Images of War*, (HMSO, 1989) for examples of MoI posters.

failed. By the late summer, the MoI realised that “exhortation must be stopped and the word ‘morale’ not be used again” as it was seen that people were working hard and were in good spirits and that attempts to goad them to even greater efforts merely served to antagonise”.¹⁴⁸ Reflecting this changing attitude the MoI issued another poster of Churchill with a few words taken from his first speech as Prime Minister when he said, “Come then let us go forward together with our united strength” (Figure 13).¹⁴⁹ Similarly, the MoI issued perhaps the most famous Churchillian poster with the text taken from his speech of 20th August 1940 (Figure 14).¹⁵⁰

One hundred thousand copies were printed with the intention that they be distributed in bulk to breweries who would then pass them on for display in public houses and considering there were 80,000 pubs in Britain, the chances are that each had at least one on display.¹⁵¹ The objective of the campaign was “to remind the public of



Figure 13 MoI Poster, 1940



Figure 14 MoI poster, c. October 1940

¹⁴⁸ Minutes of the Planning Committee 24th August 1940, INF1/251.

¹⁴⁹ “Prime Minister”, 13th May 1940, House of Commons, Churchill, *Into Battle*, p. 208. It is interesting to note that the phrase for which the speech is most famous, ‘blood tears, toil and sweat’, was not given any publicity by the MoI.

¹⁵⁰ “The Many and the Few”, House of Commons, Churchill, *Into Battle*, pp. 252-262.

¹⁵¹ Report of Planning Committee on a Home Morale Campaign, no date but early July 1940, INF1/253. Judd to Vaughan, Clark, Crossley and Bay, 14th October 1940, INF1/252.

the value of British air power and form a link in the public houses with the Spitfire fund” but it inevitably gave wider publicity to Churchill’s speech.¹⁵² Other posters were produced of Churchill, including one of him in an exhortative Kitcheneresque pose (Figure 15) and another, rather unflatteringly, as a casserole dish (Figure 16). It seems that posters of Churchill were popular with the public and that these efforts by the Ministry, at least, were welcomed. When one poster of Churchill which carried an Arabic caption was accidentally released in Britain, the MoI was flooded with requests for a further five thousand copies from factories around the country.¹⁵³ Perhaps this reflected fascination with the alien and foreign as well as a desire to display Churchill’s image. In addition to the poster, the MoI also produced – or sanctioned – publicity for Churchill in other media. By 1941 the MoI realised that “the most effective single propaganda weapon in [its] armoury [were] the speeches and broadcasts of leading Ministers, and above all of the Prime Minister” and the greatest efforts were made in order to publicise



Figure 15 MoI poster, c. January 1942

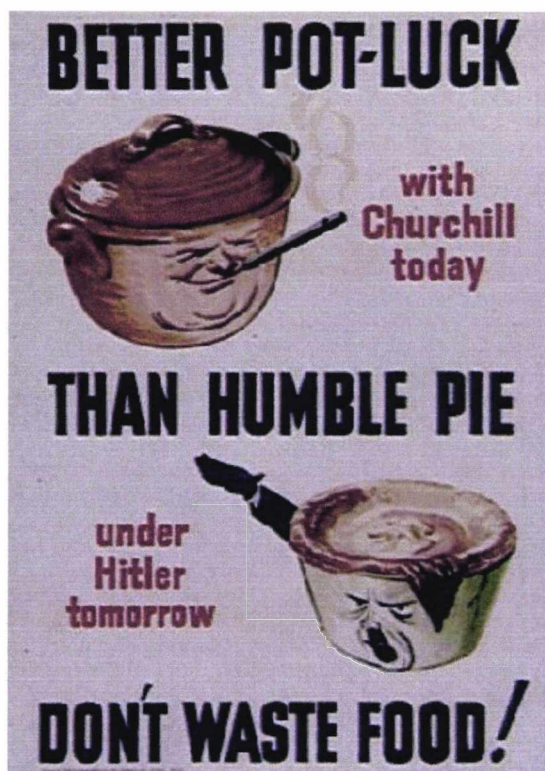


Figure 16 MoI poster, no date

¹⁵² Judd to Vaughan et al. Ibid.

¹⁵³ Minutes of the Home Publicity Committee, 12th August 1940, INF1/249.

both him and his speeches.¹⁵⁴ Churchill's signature was sought on all forms of propaganda to give added authority to the campaign in hand. MoI pamphlets on a multiplicity of topics from Coastal Command to digging for victory carried at least his signature, if not a Churchillian foreword. The most famous, perhaps, was the Battle of Britain pamphlet which reproduced an extract from his "Many and the Few" speech on the inside cover and which sold two million copies of the first unillustrated version and nine hundred thousand in the first ten days of the release of the illustrated edition.¹⁵⁵ Undoubtedly, this pamphlet helped to cement Churchill's words firmly within the national memory of the Battle of Britain and Britain's finest hour of 1940.

The MoI also facilitated the entrenchment of the image of Churchill visiting sites around Britain. At least from April 1941, although by implication also before this, the MoI arranged for Churchill to be accompanied at all times by a newsreel crew.¹⁵⁶ They were to be allowed to film Churchill on important occasions and whenever there might be a staged publicity event, such as a photograph shoot when on a visit. From August 1941, the system became more regularised with each company taking a turn on a three month rota, and indeed the regularity of the newsreel footage testifies to the durability of this agreement.¹⁵⁷ There were exceptions, however, when Churchill went on his trips abroad. On these occasions the regular crew was left at home for, when Churchill flew, space on the aircraft was very limited and it was felt it was unnecessary to expose the crew to the risks to their safety when local camera crews could provide the required footage.

Perhaps the most lavish programme undertaken by the MoI in these circumstances was the coverage of the Atlantic Meeting with Roosevelt in August 1941. Brendan Bracken had only just arrived at the MoI when he was required to co-ordinate the whole programme of publicity. The *Daily Express* wrote that the meeting proved to be his baptism as Minister and commended him on his handling of the affair.¹⁵⁸ The news, it wrote, was released promptly, together with the photographs which had been

¹⁵⁴ Minutes of the Committee of Directors of Public Relations of the Civilian Defence Committee, Executive Sub-Committee, 13th January 1941, Davidson papers, House of Lords, DAV/271.

¹⁵⁵ Minutes of the Executive Board, War Diary, 23rd April 1941, INF1/73. Churchill also contributed to the writing of this pamphlet, returning the "corrected version" to the MoI shortly before its publication. Churchill to MoI, 10th March 1941, Walter Monckton papers, Monckton Trustees, Bodleian Library, MT7/481.

¹⁵⁶ Donald Anderson to Commander Thompson, 7th April 1941, PREM4/69/2. The first surviving document regarding this matter is dated 7th April 1941 which names a substitute newsreel camera man as J.C. Harding. Presumably another crew had preceded him. Further lists continue from June 1943 to the end of the war in the same file.

¹⁵⁷ Anderson to Thompson, 31st July 1941, PREM4/69/2.

¹⁵⁸ *Daily Express* 20th August 1941.

telegraphed back from Newfoundland. How news should be released had, in fact, been discussed by the MoI's Policy Committee before Churchill had even set sail, but the carefully co-ordinated plan was upset by the early release of the news in America.¹⁵⁹ It was decided that once it had appeared in the American press, "it was no longer possible to maintain the 'stop' on this story" but that "nothing should be said to confirm it officially".¹⁶⁰ But the release of the news to the press was only one facet of the campaign. In addition, a newsreel crew accompanied Churchill across the Atlantic (although not the crew which was serving on the rota at the time) and Churchill requested that a film be made of the meeting.¹⁶¹ When the footage had been flown back to Britain, Bracken arranged for the unedited film to be shown to a select few at the MoI, which Colville described as "almost unbearably funny" and he was clearly unimpressed.¹⁶² When the footage had been "suitably bowdlerised" two days later, Bracken arranged for a second showing, this time to Churchill's domestic staff. Colville "could never have believed so good a result could be achieved from so uninspiring and amorphous a farrago of material" indicating that the MoI did have at least some redeeming expertise.¹⁶³ The same footage used for this film was released to the newsreel companies which were then able to edit it in their own way, but this still left some several thousand feet which Bracken had made into a further film. This was completed by Gaumont British a month later and a copy was presented to Churchill.¹⁶⁴ Two regular MoI writers, H.V. Morton and H. Spring also went on the voyage, at short notice and in strict secrecy, so that they could document the historic meeting. Morton's account was subsequently published as a book, *Atlantic Journey*, shortly afterwards.¹⁶⁵ Although the MoI tried to keep the Atlantic Charter at the forefront of the public's mind, it never really seized people's imagination and so when America was celebrating the two year anniversary with pageants and pomp, it was felt in Britain that "no great value" could be extracted from it, except merely "to keep several of its articles before the public eye".¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁹ Minutes of the Policy Committee, 7th and 14th August 1941, INF1/849.

¹⁶⁰ Minutes of the Executive Board, 15th August 1941, INF1/73.

¹⁶¹ MoI to Harding, which said it was "sheer hard luck" the meeting should have occurred during his tenure, 21st August 1941, PREM4/69/2. Minutes of the Planning Committee, 21st August 1941, INF1/251.

¹⁶² Colville diary, 16th August 1941, p. 427.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 18th August 1941, p. 427.

¹⁶⁴ Minutes of the Planning Committee, 21st August 1941, INF1/251. *Gaumont British* to Churchill, 25th September 1941, CHAR2/424.

¹⁶⁵ H.V. Morton, *Atlantic Journey*, (Methuen, 1941).

¹⁶⁶ Minutes of the Executive Board, 4th August 1943, INF1/73.

The scale of the Atlantic Charter coverage by the MoI revealed only a fraction of its arsenal of channels of publicity. Because the Ministry had insufficient facilities of its own for the production of propaganda campaigns, many projects were passed on to commercial firms for their completion. One such company with which the MoI worked closely during the war was the Photochrom Company, based in Tunbridge Wells. Having produced a set of postcards of the BEF in early 1940, the company approached the MoI in August with the suggestion that they also produce a series of postcards of Churchill.¹⁶⁷ The Ministry agreed and submitted four photographs of Churchill to be used for this purpose and in calendars. These included some of the most famous photographs of Churchill, including the one of him holding a Tommy gun, taken as he inspected defences in Yorkshire in July (Figure 17) and much parodied in German propaganda for its depiction of Churchill as a gangster. Another showed Churchill at Dover Castle in a steel helmet but surrounded by the typically Churchillian paraphernalia of his Homburg and walking stick (Figure 18).



Figure 17 Cropped MoI photograph, July 1940



Figure 18 Churchill at Dover 1940

¹⁶⁷ Photochrom to H.R. Francis, Director of the Photographs Division of the MoI, 31st August 1940, INF1/641.

The photographs appeared in many of the major newspapers suggesting that they were official portraits and distributed by a central body, and although this was never mentioned, the prime candidate was of course the MoI. The same ubiquity was true of a photograph of Churchill which appeared in the press shortly after the outbreak of war. It showed Churchill entering the Admiralty surrounded by dispatch boxes and, dutifully, his gasmask (Figure 19). The same photograph was used in a postcard issued, reputedly by the *Sunday Pictorial* in early 1940, but given that this too was obviously an official portrait it is likely that the card had to be sanctioned by the MoI. Cigarette cards provided another valuable opportunity for publicity, at least in the early days of the war, and the MoI did not overlook this either.¹⁶⁸ The difficulty in identifying such Governmental propaganda was that it tended not to be advertised as propaganda. A great deal of MoI material was labelled with its famous logo, but postcards and such like

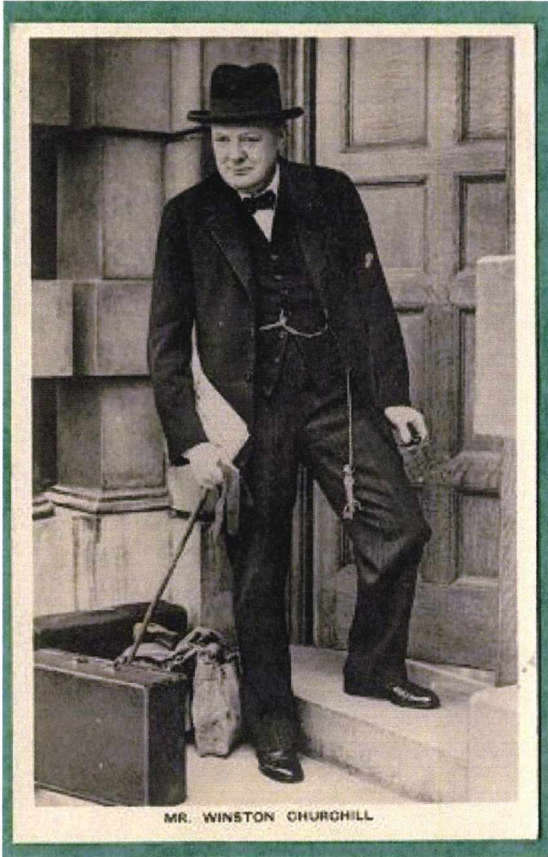


Figure 19 Churchill at the Admiralty

¹⁶⁸ Minutes of the Co-ordinating Committee, 28th November 1939, INF1/261. Many cigarette cards had been produced of Churchill, and other prominent public figures, for many years before the war. However, from 1940 they were banned by the Government to save on paper. For examples see Ronald A. Smith *Churchill: Images of Greatness* (Kevin Francis, undated) p. 172. Thanks also to Tony Sorsby for information on cigarette cards.

were not always so identified. It was decided, for example, that although the MoI had initiated its production, “the MoI should not be associated” with the distribution of a postcard that carried the words of Queen Victoria on defeatism.¹⁶⁹ No reason for this was given, but it is likely that the members of the Committee felt that any such propaganda would be more successful if no official sanction were given; it would give the impression that any patriotism inspired by the postcards arose spontaneously rather than being commanded by the Government.

A similar sense of secrecy surrounded the MoI window display scheme which came under the direction of Trevor Fenwick, of the department store chain. Very little survives of this scheme, either in MoI documents or in popular memory, perhaps because of its ephemeral nature, but this does not belie its importance. It was considered the third most important contact with the public after the press and radio.¹⁷⁰ The guiding principle was “to sustain morale and confidence by pictorial methods” for which the MoI distributed some material for free and offered other material at reduced rates.¹⁷¹ It was stressed that “there is no intention whatever of issuing special instructions as to the execution of the theme” but rather free expression and design within the parameters of that week’s particular topic were encouraged.¹⁷² It was hoped that the Ministry would be able to “co-ordinate all such effort so that each display scheme [became] one giant effort”, indicating the immutability of British propaganda.¹⁷³ As a result, the strictures of the scheme were narrowly defined and shopkeepers were instructed that their displays had to be “devoted exclusively to illustrating the chosen theme and for no other publicity purpose. No public mention also is to be made of the MoI’s connection with your display”. They had to be set up by a certain date and remain in place for six days only.¹⁷⁴ For the second week of July 1940, the MoI suggested pictures of British troops and slogans such as “This Empire fights on to final victory”, “Behind us are our overseas forces” and “Our finest hour”, echoing all of the themes of Churchill’s recent public utterances and helping to consolidate the longevity of the phrase.¹⁷⁵ Shops willing to participate in the scheme were sent free union flag posters which carried the slogan “Hold fast and we will win” and were offered sketch portraits of Churchill for 7/6 and 14/6 depending on size. Records of other campaigns have not survived but one can

¹⁶⁹ Minutes of the Home Publicity Planning Committee, 12th August 1940, INF1/249.

¹⁷⁰ Notes for Sir Kenneth Clark, undated but c. 26th June 1940, INF1/252.

¹⁷¹ National Scheme for Propaganda by Window Display. Bulletin No. 1, 26th June 1940, INF1/252.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ Notes for Kenneth Clark, 26th June 1940, INF1/252.

¹⁷⁴ National Scheme for Propaganda by Window Display. Bulletin No. 1, 26th June 1940, INF1/252.

¹⁷⁵ See Chapter 2: 1940 for further details on how the phrase became popular.

only speculate that these too reinforced Churchill's themes and publicised him to some extent.

Besides the window displays, the clandestine activities of the MoI went further. It was keen to maintain the integrity of Churchill and on occasion withheld news that might be detrimental to his status. Legally, the MoI had the right of censorship over news that was of potential use to the enemy and as such posed a breach of security to the country, but protecting Churchill's public image clearly did not come under the umbrella of this provision. This did not, however, prevent the Ministry from suppressing certain stories. On one such occasion it was reported that during one of his many trips abroad Churchill had demanded lifeboats be put to both port and starboard of his ship and that each be provided with bottles of brandy and a machine gun. It was felt that this painted Churchill in a bad light and that it would be bad for morale since ordinary sailors had recourse to neither brandy nor machine guns in the event of their being shipwrecked. Although the censors felt they could not stop the story in the interests of national security, it was seen that it was "most undesirable that the story should be passed". Accordingly, steps were taken to prevent its dissemination.¹⁷⁶ On another occasion Brendan Bracken, as Churchill's Parliamentary Secretary, requested that the MoI suppress a particularly bad interview Churchill had given with American journalist, Edgar Mowrer, and asked that any interview in the future should not be passed without Churchill's express approval. Books were also censored by Downing Street, Churchill's secretary, for example, asked R.H. Kiernan to delete certain passages from his forthcoming biography.¹⁷⁷

In addition to its other tasks, the MoI served as a central depot for a great number of photographs which were issued to the press and other agencies when occasion arose. By December 1940, the Photographs Division was overworked in "faking" photographs and removing extraneous details which would otherwise render a photograph useless.¹⁷⁸ As Kenneth Clark wrote to the Director-General, "retouch is an important activity. I remember a time when valuable photographs could not be produced on account of one small flag in the background and I think it is quite legitimate to remove such details of this kind".¹⁷⁹ Such expedencies may have been legitimate in

¹⁷⁶ "J.H.P." to Anthony Bevir, Churchill's secretary, 2nd December 1943, PREM4/69/2.

¹⁷⁷ Bracken to Churchill, 17th July 1940, CHAR2/396. Hill to Kiernan, 19th February 1942, CHAR2/439. Kiernan, *Churchill*, (Harrap, 1942).

¹⁷⁸ I.J. Embleton to Vaughan, 2nd December 1940, INF1/86.

¹⁷⁹ Clark to Director-General, 5th December 1940, INF1/86.

war and speeded up the production process considerably, however, on certain occasions the practice was questionable.

As mentioned in the previous section, Churchill produced a number of volumes of his speeches throughout the war which made him substantial personal profit. These were undertaken as a private enterprise, nevertheless, in the volume of his speeches from 1944, *The Dawn of Liberation*, the MoI's Photographs Division had a definite role in its production. The volume contained six plates of photographs of Churchill on various important occasions throughout that year, which had been supplied by the MoI. The Deputy Director of the Division, C.H. Gibb, wrote to Churchill that some had been "carefully retouched and spotted, and in some cases some obtrusive details removed or pushed back in tone".¹⁸⁰ One obvious example of this shows Churchill on a firing range with Eisenhower and General Hodges where the background (and Eisenhower) have been rather inexpertly faded to make Churchill a more prominent figure in the photograph (Figure 20). Gibb also suggested captions for the photographs, three of which were accepted verbatim.¹⁸¹ In another volume, *Onwards to Victory*, of his 1943 speeches, another photograph has been similarly doctored (Figure 21 – note the mysteriously vanishing sea behind Churchill) suggesting that the MoI also had a hand in the production of this volume. While the retouching of photographs in this way is fairly innocuous, it shows that the Ministry clearly appreciated the propaganda value of the speeches, but it also raises the question of whether or not the promotion of one

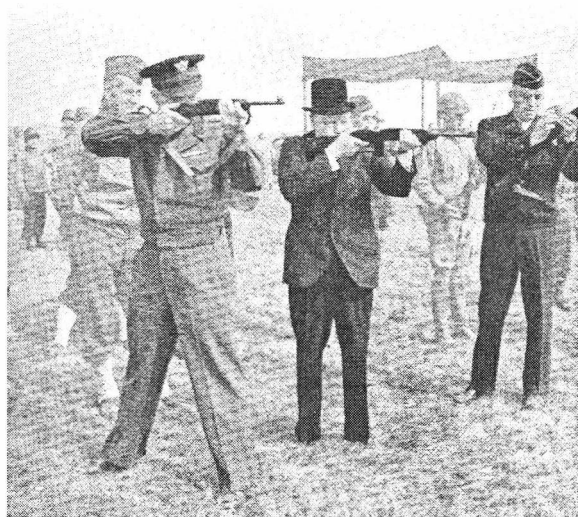


Figure 20 Churchill and Eisenhower
Taken from Churchill, *The Dawn of Liberation*

¹⁸⁰ C.H. Gibb to Churchill, 15th January 1945, CHAR8/806.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.



Figure 21 Churchill and the vanishing sea taken from Churchill, *Onwards Towards Victory*

individual to such extremes was a legitimate function of a Government department.¹⁸²

The parameters of the MoI's role had developed over a number of years during the inter-war period. Although the planning for a MoI in the event of war did not begin until 1935, attitudes towards Governmental publicity had steadily been developing during this time.¹⁸³ Although on the one hand there was an element of distaste for propaganda in all its forms among some higher placed officials,¹⁸⁴ it was also seen that communication between the Government and the public was increasingly necessary in

¹⁸² It also raises the question of the legitimacy of using Governmental resources for an otherwise private enterprise. However, the surviving documentation does not indicate whether Churchill approached the MoI or whether the MoI volunteered its services in the interests of propaganda, making judgement on the matter difficult. E.P. Stacpole of the Press Association did question the legitimacy of Churchill making a profit on speeches written in his capacity as Prime Minister and argued that they belonged to the British nation and should not therefore have been used for personal profit. Margach, *The Abuse of Power*, pp. 65-66.

¹⁸³ For more on the planning of the MoI see Temple Willcox "Towards a Ministry of Information" in *History* Vol. 69, No. 227, 1984, pp. 398-414 and McLaine, *Ministry of Morale*, pp. 12-33. For inter-war publicity see Mariel Grant, *Propaganda and the Role of the State in Inter-war Britain* (Oxford University Press, 1994).

¹⁸⁴ Sir Horace Wilson, Chamberlain's close adviser, for example, found himself "unable to show enthusiasm for propaganda by this country" and could not bring himself to believe "that it is a good substitute for calmly getting on with the business of Govt., including a rational foreign policy" (Minute Wilson to Chamberlain, June 1938, PREM 1/272.). Lord Vansittart, Permanent Secretary of the Foreign Office, similarly felt that it would not be possible "to combine the policy of appeasement with a forward policy in propaganda" as even well-meaning press coverage might have a deleterious effect on diplomatic relations. Summary of Vansittart's proposals by E. Hale of the Foreign Office, 2nd June 1938, PREM 1/272, quoted in Yass, *This Is Your War*, p. 4.

peace and would be most vital in the apocalyptic war that was anticipated. It was therefore with some reticence that the MoI was set up two days after the outbreak of war in 1939 and amidst not a little confusion as to its function.¹⁸⁵ Its thirteen divisions, unevenly staffed, revealed that its principal duties were the censorship of news and its dissemination, and, except perhaps for the suppression of stories about lifeboats and poorly conducted interviews, it discharged these functions legitimately and well with regards to publicity surrounding Churchill. In addition to these roles, the MoI also had a duty to the British public itself. In September 1938, during the planning stages, these were defined as:

- 1) To get British war aims understood, the Government's efforts in pursuance of them, at home and on the fighting fronts clearly interpreted and appreciated in the United Kingdom. (sic)
- 2) To perform a like service for the aims and efforts of our Allies.
- 3) To secure the prompt and wide dissemination of such instructions, advice and reassurance as individual Government Departments may wish to communicate.
- 4) To prepare the public mind for new measures contemplated by the Government...
- 5) To prevent panics, to allay apprehensions and to remove misconceptions...
- 6) Generally to keep the public in good heart.
- 7) By the dissemination of truth to attack the enemy in the minds of the public; and to counter enemy propaganda as required.
- 8) To reflect in the United Kingdom, as circumstances dictate and opportunity allow, the attitude of neutral countries.¹⁸⁶

The fifth and sixth objectives occupied much of the MoI's output, certainly within the first few months of the war, and the poster of Churchill's Manchester speech from January 1940, the booklet *Winston Churchill's Fighting Speeches* and the spirit of derring-do inspired by the Dunkirk evacuation all testify to this aspect of the MoI's work. In fact, through the summer of 1940 Churchill's speeches and the official line of propaganda complemented each other to a surprising degree. In his speech of 4th June in which he describes the evacuation from Dunkirk, for example, Churchill keenly stressed the role played by the Belgian King in exposing the British and French troops to the German

¹⁸⁵ Even by January 1940 the Ministry still had not fully discovered and adopted its role. As Reith, the new Minister for Information later wrote, "One was being told to do a job by a man [Chamberlain] who agreed that one ought to do whatever one was asked to do; but who could not or would not tell one what the job was; nor what, if any, support he could give." Reith, *Into the Wind*, p.353.

¹⁸⁶ Appendix to report of the Home Publicity Sub-Committee, 27th September 1938, INF1/713. See also Appendix 3 for the Ministry's functions in 1941.

Army, and underlines the valiant role played by the Navy and the RAF. This, however, was not how many of the soldiers saw it and many complained of the lack of air cover, a complaint taken up in the massively popular *Guilty Men*.¹⁸⁷ Officially, however, MI 7 (b) took steps to “stop wild talk among returning troops” and the MoI sought to find out where the soldiers would land, where they would be billeted and what experiences they had gone through so that efforts could be taken to suppress their version of events.¹⁸⁸ In addition, the MoI undertook to “do our best to see that the Press give no currency to the kind of undesirable gossip” that was being spread by the soldiers; the press contained only stories of heroism of the three forces and blamed the situation entirely on King Leopold, taking much the same stance as Churchill.¹⁸⁹ Churchill, together with Eden, also attempted to ensure unity in the literature of Dunkirk. The poet laureate, John Masefield, had been given material on the Battle of Flanders and Dunkirk so that he could write a piece on Britain’s ‘miracle’. What he produced was a diary form of acts of individual heroism, but it had “no plan and [gave] a bad impression”.¹⁹⁰ Churchill agreed with Eden that the story be recast, adding that “we are entitled to do this as he asked for special facilities which were accorded him”.¹⁹¹ Masefield was duly informed that:

the subject matter gave a picture of the opinions leading up to the Dunkirk evacuation which was incomplete in itself and, moreover, liable to be misinterpreted by many readers...The Prime Minister considers it most unfortunate that it should be possible for conclusions disparaging to the High Command to be drawn from the writings of such a high authority as yourself...He, therefore, with great reluctance, directed that the book be withdrawn.

but Churchill allowed Masefield the opportunity to “recast those passages in the book which deal with the part played by the Army”.¹⁹²

The MoI also endeavoured to ensure unity in the public’s attitude towards the war as it was embodied in Churchill’s speeches. The speech of 4th June, with its famous phrase “we shall fight on the beaches”, was only one incarnation in which Churchill expounded his determination to fight on. Although some of his speeches whilst at the Admiralty had vented similar intentions, it was only once he became Prime Minister that

¹⁸⁷ See Chapter 1 for more on *Guilty Men*.

¹⁸⁸ Anonymous memorandum, 27th May 1940, INF1/533.

¹⁸⁹ Deputy Secretary to Davidson, Monckton, Major Sheppard of the Military Affairs Section, and MI 7, 29th May 1940, INF1/533.

¹⁹⁰ Eden to Churchill, 20th December 1940, CHAR20/27.

¹⁹¹ Churchill to Eden, 21st December 1940, CHAR20/27.

¹⁹² Margesson, who took over from Eden at the War Office, to Masefield, 1st January 1941, CHAR20/27.

they became so unequivocal. “We shall never surrender” encapsulated this spirit and dispelled any notion that a peace agreement would be considered, let alone adopted. When Italy offered to negotiate peace following Dunkirk the MoI took Churchill’s unrelenting view:

Under no circumstances must we allow the rapid and intense rallying of public confidence and patriotism...to be diverted, delayed or watered down by the red-herring of an illusory prospect of peace...This word ‘peace’ must be expunged from the public mind in relation to this transparent snare. It must be given a name wherein the word ‘peace’ has no part. ‘Hitler’s truce trap’ is one suggestion...The press must speak as one voice. Both press and radio must make it clear that Britain fights on.¹⁹³

Once again, the news media concurred and adopted this particular stance, especially the popular *Daily Mirror* which undertook a more defiant tone than any of the other newspapers; there was no media discussion of peace in 1940, except in the *Daily Worker*, the organ of the Communist Party, which was banned for export in September and then banned completely four months later.

Attendant with the commitment to wage war was the optimism that, come what may, Britain would be victorious in the end. However, in the summer of 1940, despite all the talk of (MoI induced) Dunkirk spirit, the public could only see the German Army rolling across the Continent and with much of its equipment left behind in France, the British Army seemed denuded and vulnerable. Sir Kenneth Clark noted that “some difficulty arose in convincing the people that the war could be won. The theme of economic warfare was difficult to make effective. People wanted to feel that we were hitting back.”¹⁹⁴ Churchill’s speeches provided the perfect vehicle for this. Not only did he embody belligerence and defiance, he also personified confidence and optimism. As was seen in Churchill’s “Unknown Warrior” broadcast of 14th July, for example, the public very much appreciated this aspect of his character and trusted in his judgements implicitly.¹⁹⁵ His reputation for honesty reinforced - and was reinforced by - this, as indeed it was by the MoI’s insistence that only the truth was told by the democratic states.¹⁹⁶ It was felt that one antidote for lack of confidence in victory was to

¹⁹³ Minutes of the Planning Committee, 8th June 1940, INF1/251. Emphasis in the original.

¹⁹⁴ Minutes of the Policy Committee, 21st June 1940, DAV/270. In 1940 many of those in the Government thought that the economic collapse of Germany was imminent which would end the war relatively peacefully. The public either did not believe this or could not grasp its ramifications.

¹⁹⁵ See Chapter 2.

¹⁹⁶ See article 7 of the MoI’s duty to the public above.

disseminate “facts to promote confidence in the trustworthiness of our leadership” of which Churchill was the principal character.¹⁹⁷

By December 1940, the MoI saw a need for additional propaganda to help people cope with the anxieties of the Blitz, which were exacerbated by the winter and the blackout. By this time the MoI had learned not to exhort the public and so there followed a campaign wherein the ideal was set by example. This generated a whole genre of films, for example *Britain Can Take It* (1940) and *Ordinary People* (1942), in which the principal characters were the epitome of perseverance and quiet confidence.¹⁹⁸ At the same time it was realised that Churchill’s words could work wonders to stiffen resolve and promote public sanguinity and it is from around this date that the Legend began to appear. His speeches of the summer of 1940 provided the perfect model of resolve, determination and confidence to reinforce both faith in ultimate victory and resolution to continue through the Blitz. Concerning talk of victory, the MoI concluded that it “should be handled carefully if it were not to strain credulity. Public confidence was in a delicate state. Taranto and Greece had only provided temporary alleviation after which the public relapsed into scepticism.”¹⁹⁹ To overcome the lack of faith in victory it was suggested that “the Prime Minister might be asked to broadcast an appeal at the New Year expressing confidence”. Significantly, however, it was added in view of the unstable situation, “It must be realised...that it is vital to maintain the Prime Minister’s reputation as a man who does not indulge in easy optimism.”²⁰⁰

These telling statements show how seriously the MoI took its task of maintaining morale and how closely the image of Churchill fit with the wider campaign undertaken by the MoI. In this instance, Churchill was scarcely a figurehead, but more of a vehicle through which the public’s spirits could be manipulated and controlled. But in the Ministry’s view, this publicity of an individual did not undermine its democratic function. The Co-ordinating Committee, for example, agreed that “means which might perhaps be used to build up publicity for certain leaders of the fighting services” should be discussed.²⁰¹ Similarly in early 1940, one of Lord Gort’s ADCs went to see Reith, the then Minister for Information, about a film which he had just seen. In it Hore-Belisha

¹⁹⁷ Minutes of the Policy Committee, c. 17th December 1940, INF1/251.

¹⁹⁸ For more on films and the development of the Myth see James Chapman, *The British at War*, (Tauris, 1998) especially the chapters on state control and the development of the People’s War.

¹⁹⁹ Duty Room Report, 5th December 1940, INF1/251. These two operations proved very successful against the Italians and much of the Italian Navy was destroyed at Taranto and its Army was routed from Greece.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Minutes of the Co-ordinating Committee, 1st November 1939, INF1/867.

had been applauded, but Gort's appearance was met with apathetic silence. Wishing to boost the public standing of his master, the ADC asked if the MoI could do anything to help, to which Reith replied that he could.²⁰² Again, during a reassessment of the MoI's functions in December 1940, further indications of its willingness to promote an individual were given. In an example of its potential activities it was written, "There are certain indications the Prime Minister's prestige is not quite as strong as it was. What facts have contributed to this? What plan can be evolved for sustaining popular confidence while retaining the rights of criticism?"²⁰³ Although this was only a suggestion for what campaigns the MoI could undertake, it is important for understanding what the MoI considered acceptable subjects for its campaigns outside the liberal paradigm it had set for itself in the inter-war period. Equally, it is not insignificant that Churchill's reputation and popularity cemented themselves firmly amongst the public shortly after this date. Although no single document can prove the link between Churchill's popularity and the work of the MoI, there are sufficient parallels and sympathies between the aims of both parties to suggest that the MoI did in fact have a significant part to play in the creation of the Churchill Legend. This worked on a number of levels, from simple exposure in the news to the promotion of particular aspects of Churchill's character, especially his optimism and confidence. The latter especially complemented the MoI's over-arching policies of urging utmost exertion for the war effort and a rejection of any peace proposals. The consensus found between Government policy, as expressed through the MoI's campaigns and materials and Churchill's own words provided a consistent platform upon which the popular memory of the war would be based.

Commercial Dissemination

As was seen in an earlier section, many commercial firms petitioned Downing Street to be allowed to use Churchill's image in their wares. This was often turned down in the early days of the war but from 1941 the firms were advised that there was no legal necessity for them to obtain Churchill's consent, with the caveat that it must not be taken as an expression of approval of any particular project. However, many companies simply went ahead with production without first seeking permission. Production of Churchill

²⁰² Reith, *Into the Wind*, p. 365.

²⁰³ Plan for Home Publicity policy, 10th December 1940, INF1/251.

figures and other memorabilia was by no means exceptional at this time and Churchill items, along with other well-known people, had figured prominently in the material culture of the twentieth century up to that point, although the 1930s had seen little produced of Churchill himself. Postcards and cigarette cards of political leaders were also common in the pre-war period and postcards continued to be produced throughout the war.²⁰⁴

The postcard made of Churchill on the steps of the Admiralty has already been mentioned (Figure 19) but throughout the war these were supplemented by a number of other cards commemorating significant occasions and celebrating the leaders of the war. Figure 22 shows a post card of the four principal Allied leaders produced by Photochrom Co. which had close contact with the MoI. Another company, Valentine's which also had contacts with the MoI, produced a series of postcards entitled "Helpful Thoughts" which on occasion depicted Churchill together with extracts from his speeches or else lamentable poems by Allan Junior (Figure 23).



Figure 22 Photochrom Postcard
Hall, *The Book of Churchilliana*, p. 116



Figure 23 'Helpful Thoughts' postcard
Hall, *The Book of Churchilliana*, p. 117

²⁰⁴ All the ensuing information came from a variety of verbal sources, for example antique dealers and enthusiasts and my own observations, and so cannot be accredited properly or indeed verified. Very little work has been published on the subject of Churchill memorabilia, but two books which stand out are Douglas Hall's *The Book of Churchilliana* (New Cavendish Books, 2002) and Ronald A. Smith's *Churchill: Images of Greatness*. See also H.D.G. Pugh, *Naval Ceramics* (Naval Ceramics Book Company, 1971) and J. Eric Engstrom, *Medallic Portraits of Sir Winston Churchill* (Sprint and Son, 1972) although these have not been considered here as medals tended to be a post-war phenomenon since metal was required for the war effort.

In addition to postcards, three-dimensional effigies were also made, including figurines and toby jugs. The figurines were less common than the toby jugs, and tended to emphasise Churchill's Britishness appearing in guises as John Bull or else as a bulldog, images that were popularised in political cartoons. Figures 24 and 25 show Churchill as a bulldog and date from 1941 and 1943 respectively. Figure 24 is a wartime rarity in depicting a bulldog with Churchill's face although the style of Figure 25 was copied many times over. The yachting cap and the cigar were the most prominent and commonly used badges of identity to leave the viewer in no doubt as to whose image was represented. All three elements of Britishness – Churchill, bull dog and John Bull – are portrayed in the toby jug made by Burgess and Leigh in 1941 (Figure 26). More commonly, though, toby jugs celebrated Churchill himself. One of the earliest of Churchill during the war, and possibly the finest crafted, shows him as a ship's figurehead amidst flowing waves (Figure 27) whereas others depict him with some naval apparatus, such as an anchor (Figure 28). Most Churchill toby jugs, however, date from 1941 or else are post-war which may reflect the changing attitude in the office at Downing Street concerning the copyright of Churchill's image and his growing appeal to the public. From this date, a number of different versions were produced, although they tended to follow one of two designs. One showed Churchill in his yachting cap, an item



Figure 24 Unmarked bulldog, c. 1941
Smith, *Churchill*, p. 173.



Figure 25 Doulton bulldog, c. 1943
Smith, *Churchill*, p. 173.



Figure 26, Hall, *The Book of Churchilliana*, p. 27

of clothing which he favoured when visiting ships and naval institutions (Figures 29 and 30). The second depicted Churchill in a large hat, often a top hat, which was easier to model on a toby jug than his more usual Homburg, together with his customary spotted bow tie (Figures 31 and 32). Both of these were common images in the newsreels and in the press, but it was the addition of the cigar from 1941 which distinguished the later jugs. This may have been to disguise particularly bad craftsmanship as it gave an additional prop with which to identify who was being portrayed, although it is unlikely anyone could mistake the combination of a rugged face, a hat and a bow tie. That poorly crafted versions, such as Figure 32, were available as well as the more finely worked versions suggests that the jugs were made to suit all pockets, not just the wealthy or those with a peculiar penchant for collecting toby jugs. One exquisite version was produced at



Figure 27 Hall, p. 35.



Figure 28 Hall, p. 35



Figure 29 Hall, p.35



Figure 30 Hall, p. 35.



Figure 31 Hall, p. 36




Figure 32 Hall, p. 36

the end of 1940 for sale at Harrod's in time for the Christmas rush (Figure 33).²⁰⁵ Priced at 5 guineas it was hardly within the pocket of most working people, but it shows Churchill in an unusual guise for this time. Dressed in naval uniform, sitting on a bulldog and a union flag and embracing a battleship was an image more associated with his role as First Lord of the Admiralty, suggesting that the design had been a long time in production. The flier from Harrods reinforces Churchill's determination to fight on, with the quotation from his speech following Dunkirk.

*'We shall fight on,
if necessary
for years,
if necessary alone!'*

An historic addition to the famous Toby Jug series. This model of our Premier is a work of art, and will be valued down the years as a treasured symbol of an epic age. A limited issue of 350 at **5 GNS**

China Department, Second Floor.



By Government Order

THE STORE WILL CLOSE AT 4 P.M.

(SATURDAYS 1 o'clock)

from Monday November 25 to Saturday December 28

HARRODS LTD LONDON SW1

Figure 33 Hall, *The Book of Churchilliana*, p. 165

²⁰⁵ Hall claims that this jug was produced for the 1941 Christmas market, however 25th November fell on a Tuesday in 1941 and not Monday as the flier states, suggesting that it was on sale in 1940. Also, the caption, "If necessary for years..." as indeed Churchill's naval uniform were more apposite in 1940 when Churchill had recently been First Lord and Britain was fighting alone against Germany than after the Soviet Union had joined the war. Hall, *The Book of Churchilliana*, p. 165.

Other, smaller and more affordable items of Churchill memorabilia were also available on the market. These might range from the everyday his-and-hers matchbox covers and handbag mirrors, to money boxes, which were distributed through the schools in 1940 so that children could ‘save for victory’, and to the sublime, for example, a climbing Churchill-headed monkey on a ladder in a bottle toy.²⁰⁶ Other common items included biscuit tins, jigsaws, bookmarks, candle holders, bottle stops, key rings, playing cards, corkscrews, nutcrackers; in fact just about anything that could be moulded or printed carried Churchill’s image. On VE Day in London, one “beery-looking hawker” in particular had a very successful trade, despite stiff competition, selling Churchill buttonhole badges, calling “Churchill for 6^d, worth more”.²⁰⁷ Thus by VE Day, Churchill and victory were already synonymous. A further exclusive example of memorabilia was a set of bookends fashioned out of the rubble of the House of Commons after it had been bombed in May 1941, which carried lead medallions of Churchill and Roosevelt. Roosevelt also figured with Churchill on memorabilia of the Atlantic Charter, a great deal of which was produced at the time. Besides the usual postcards, commemorative cups and plates were also issued often muted in design to conserve materials for the war effort. One such design stresses that the Charter was “For democracy” (Figure 34) while other, more everyday-ware coffee mugs were made with cartoons of Churchill and Roosevelt (Figure 35).

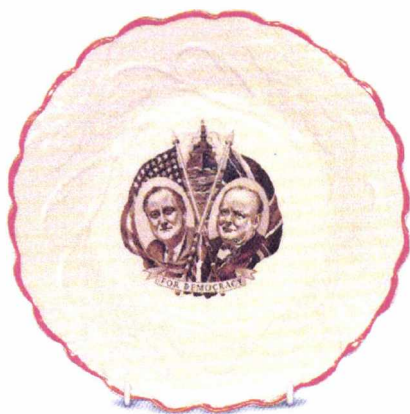


Figure 34 Hall, *The Book of Churchillana*, p.149.



Figure 35 Hall, *The Book of Churchillana*, p. 150.

²⁰⁶ Thanks to Jack Darrah of the Churchill Rooms, Bletchley Park for showing me all these items.

²⁰⁷ MO FR 2263, *Victory in Europe*, June 1945. He later said to the interviewer, “I wish I’d brought more. The old boy’s a good selling line”.



Figure 36 Government issue sepia transfer

A more pervasive image of Churchill was to be found on crockery produced in Britain from 1942 onwards. A ban imposed that year meant that decorated crockery could not be produced for the home market, although it was allowed for export to help swell the coffers of the war effort. However, it was felt that this was bad for morale as it made the stringent conditions after nearly four years of war all the more grim, so to cheer the public, from 1943 a standard sepia transfer of Winston Churchill was allowed. This found its way on to any number of items, from the standard cup and saucer (Figure 36) to gravy boats, ceramic boxes and cream jugs.

The pervasiveness of the image of Churchill in wartime Britain is striking. Although the above omits mention of most other leaders and politicians, it remains that the attention paid to Churchill far out-stripped that paid to others. The Government, for instance, did not decide that pictures of Attlee, the deputy Prime Minister, could be used on decorated crockery. By contrast, Churchill's image was on almost every type of item and everyone would have been in daily contact with some effigy of Churchill, even if the items were not in their own possession. The transition of his image from the public space, as seen in posters and newspapers, to the private, manifested in cups and crockery which people chose to have in their homes, showed a willingness on the part of the public to embrace Churchill and his role. In this respect, it is significant that the Churchill products appeared only in any great quantity from 1941, at the same time as public opinion was solidifying in his favour. But the commercialisation of Churchill's image had a two-fold effect. On the one hand, it embedded Churchill as a symbol of

wartime Britain and on the other it re-enforced acceptance of him. The bombardment of the public with this image would make it difficult to dissent from adulation and the material detritus of wartime lofts and living rooms would serve to re-enforce the Legend as it developed in the post-war period.

C o n c l u s i o n

Given the evidence, it is unlikely that Churchill's iconic status arose spontaneously among the British public during the war. Instead, he was surrounded by publicity which deified him from the outset. This publicity was not generally of his own design as the predominating view would hold, but was carefully constructed by other external bodies, especially the MoI, to present a particular image of Churchill as belligerent, confident, determined yet benevolent, and as a figure who was capable of unifying the country. So important was this felt to be that the MoI overstepped its carefully defined role as a benignant disseminator of democratic propaganda, although this may not have been by design or even recognised as being a contravention of its duties. MoI publicity was complemented by propaganda principally in the press which also served other functions. These might be to reassure the public that victory would eventually belong to Britain or to give the public heart to carry on and this message was reiterated in a multiplicity of other channels and media, creating a complete programme of propaganda. In turn, these created the Myth of the British at war, how people rallied together and somehow muddled through. Churchill was central to this Myth and his exhortations, especially in the first half of the summer of 1940, provided the paradigm to which everyone was expected to aspire; to fail to do so would be to fail in one's duty, not only to one's neighbours, but also to one's country.

By the beginning of 1941, Churchill had come to embody the national struggle through the selective use of his speeches and his portrayal as a bulldog with the union flag billowing somewhere in the background. The triumph of the Battle of Britain was beginning to permeate national consciousness by this date, and by immortalising the bravery of the Few in his speech, Churchill came to be the voice of that battle. Equally, he articulated the determination to fight which people were expected to possess as well as the magnitude of Britain's Finest Hour. As such an embodiment of the nation, to criticise Churchill would be to question the legitimacy of the British cause. Dissenting voices could not be raised for fear of sounding unpatriotic.

The press largely subscribed to this consensus, at least until the end of 1940. But much more than simply refraining from criticism, the two biggest selling newspapers, the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mirror*, idolised Churchill almost from the outbreak of war. Even without support from other newspapers, this meant that over four and a half million people (or more, given the multiple readership of each copy) had a daily lesson in Churchill's greatness until the end of 1940, and for the three million or so readers of the *Daily Express*, this continued until the end of the war. That is, around a tenth of the adult population of Britain were fed an unmitigated diet of Churchill adulation in 1940. It is tempting to conclude that there were three million or more automatic worshippers of Churchill in the country, but that would obviously strip the public of any ability to think freely. Realistically, however, it would have had a certain degree of effect by defining a 'reality' that Churchill was indeed a massively popular figure, if not necessarily forcing individuals to worship at the Churchill shrine themselves.

Such coverage in the press was complemented by the saturation of his image to form a complete programme of propaganda through MoI sanctioned publicity and commercial firms simultaneously buying into and boosting the Churchill cult. His image adorned street corners, shop windows and bulletin boards. People lit their cigarettes with matches from Churchill encrusted matchboxes. They pinned his likeness to their lapels. They enhanced their traditional British Sunday roast with gravy from Churchill-endorsed gravy jugs. As the war progressed and a material record built up on people's mantelpieces and in their cupboards, it became more difficult to reject him as the wartime leader. People's roles changed from the passive consumers of his image, as they were in 1940, to active purchasers of his representation and his thoughts and words in 1941 and beyond. Immersion in Churchilliana generated its own compunction to accept him: his image would not be quite so ubiquitous were he not so great; were he not so great he would not be so popular; were he not so popular his image would not be so ubiquitous, and so *ad infinitum*. To break the chain and voice dissent presented its own difficulties: if everyone were praising Churchill, to whom could one voice dissatisfaction? Given human nature and the tendency to concede to the majority, it would have been a strong and independent individual who went against the tide. By creating the *illusion* of majority opinion, it is easily constructed in reality. Propaganda need not work directly on the individual to achieve its aims.

In this way, the Legend of Winston Churchill arose, through a unified and ubiquitous body of propaganda that depicted a consistent image of Churchill. It was not,

Part Two: The Legend Challenged

As was demonstrated in the first part of the thesis, the Churchill Legend arose during the first two years of the war and was facilitated by the emergent Myth of the Blitz. The rest of the war saw this Legend simultaneously consolidated and challenged. The public's resurgent interest in political matters put pressure on Churchill to step beyond his role as a military leader and turn his attention to domestic issues, but his unassailable status largely protected him from damaging criticism. The remainder of the thesis reveals how these contradictory sentiments affected the public's perception of Churchill and how this was ultimately expressed in the General Election of 1945.

The three topics examined in the ensuing chapters, of military, diplomatic and politic leadership, are closely interwoven and there are many overlaps in subject matter. The military situation, for example, had a reciprocal bearing on Churchill's diplomatic aims as well as his popularity, which also affected his political standing. For ease of discussion, the three have been treated separately within a broadly chronological framework, beginning with 1941. This facilitates the exposure of Churchill's gradual declining popularity in the two periods 1940-42 and 1943-45 as is suggested by BIPO's results (Figure 37).

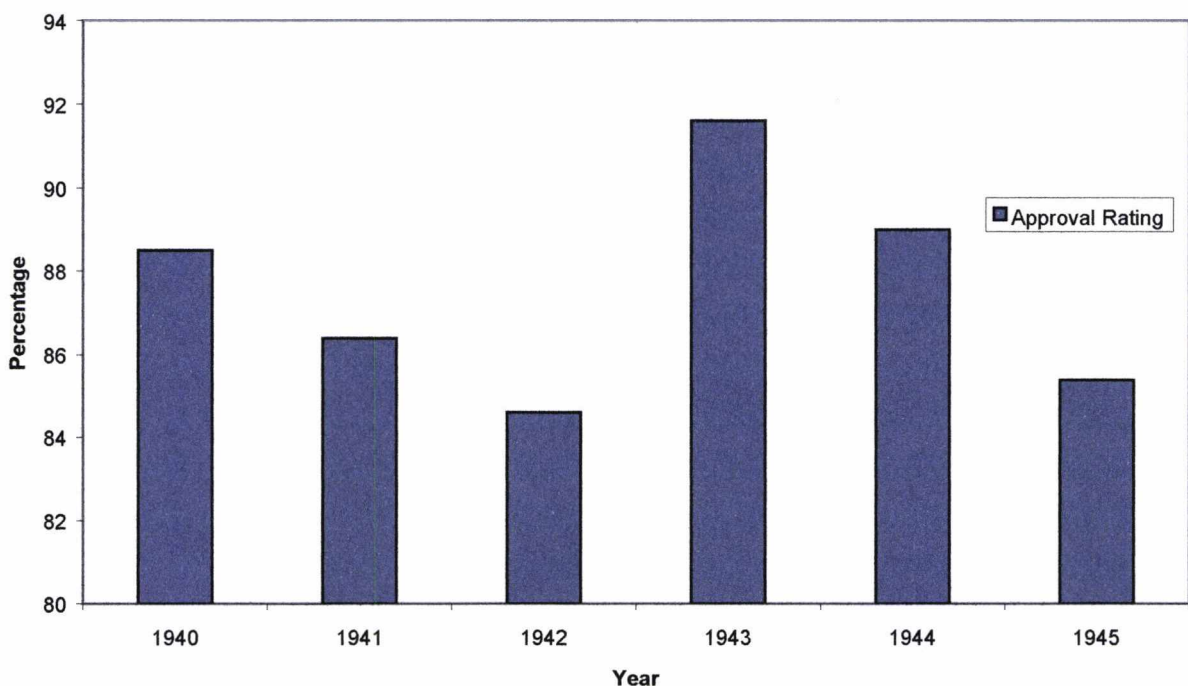


Figure 37 Churchill's average annual approval rating according to BIPO

Chapter 4

International Affairs

Introduction

Churchill's career as a world statesman clearly had an enormous impact on his image in the post-war era, marked in popular memory by the iron curtain speech delivered at Fulton, Missouri in 1946.¹ Equally, his diplomatic and military missions during the war also bore some influence on how he was perceived by the British public. Between the outbreak of war in 1939 and VE day, Churchill made almost thirty journeys abroad, often to several locations on the same trip. This meant a great deal of the coverage of Churchill in the media concerned this particular aspect of his public image. However, the public's interest in Churchill's diplomatic pursuits varied throughout the war and faded as people became inured to his travels. The military implications of many of his journeys were not always realised at the time for the details of the meetings were necessarily kept secret for the duration. On a different level, Churchill's centrality to the military situation was demonstrated through his regular statements in the House of Commons and his prognoses on the outcomes of various military campaigns. The public came to depend on these and people's opinions of him were accordingly affected by the accuracy of his predictions.

Tracing the rises and falls in Churchill's popularity as they were affected by the military situation and his role in diplomatic affairs is the principal aim of this chapter. It supports A.J.P. Taylor's claim that the military campaign was a vital factor in Churchill's popularity.² Indeed, a glance at BIPO's poll results would indicate this (Figure 38).³ This reveals that the peaks in Churchill's standing occurred in December 1942 and June and August 1943, whilst the troughs appeared in February, March, April, and July 1942. Each of these dates saw significant turns in military events, Churchill's approval rating rising when the campaign was successful and conversely falling when the

¹ For more on Churchill's post-war status see John Ramsden "How Winston Churchill Became 'The Greatest Living Englishman'" in *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 1998, pp. 1-40. Also John Ramsden, *Man of the Century: Winston Churchill and His Legend Since 1945*, (Harper Collins, 2002).

² A.J.P. Taylor, "The Statesman" p. 43 in *Churchill, Four Faces and the Man* (Book Club Associates, 1969), pp. 9-52. See also Denis Kavanagh, who argues "there is little point in relating military reverses to the slight changes in approval" in *Crisis, Charisma and British Political Leadership*, (Sage Publications, 1974) p. 23.

³ See also Appendix 4, Table 14 for BIPO's results through the war.

Approval of Churchill's Premiership (BIPO polls)

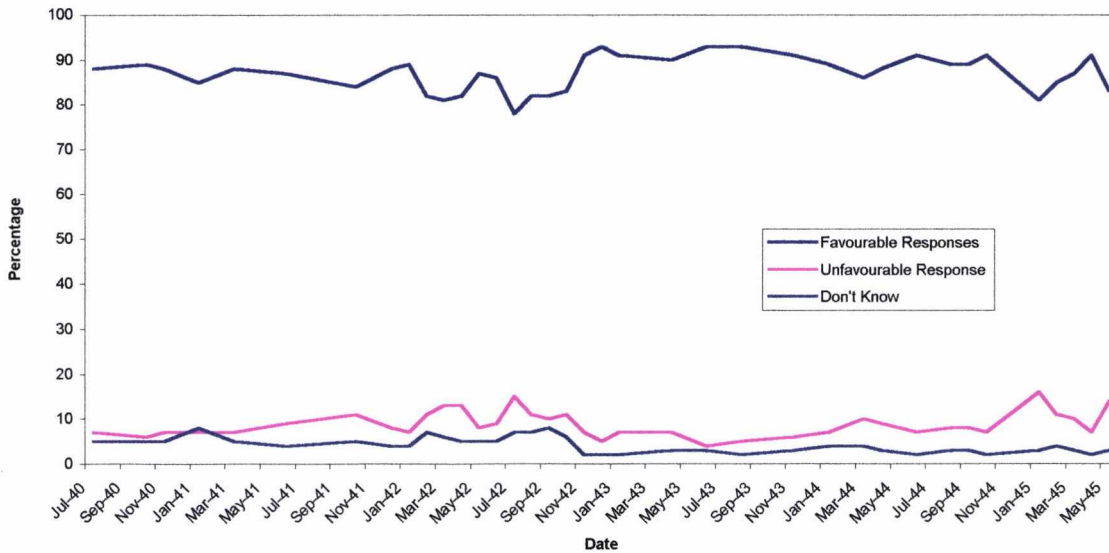


Figure 38

military situation took an unfavourable turn. Indeed, this provides the classic understanding of Churchill's changing status with the British public. As Michael Balfour claimed, July 1942, shortly after the fall of Tobruk, saw the "record low" in Churchill's standing.⁴ Other historians have taken a slightly more optimistic view, pointing out that "month after month, year after year, [Churchill's] approval rating as Prime Minister was never to fall below 78 per cent".⁵ This is indeed still a remarkably high figure but somewhat less than the more usual 85 per cent or more. But besides Taylor's suggestion that the military situation affected Churchill's standing, BIPO's data does not indicate why Churchill's standing should be shaken in July 1942, nor does it explain why Churchill's standing actually fell following the long-awaited invasion of the Continent in 1944. Clearly, other factors were at work.

A comparison of BIPO's results with the findings of the qualitative sources of HI and MO suggests a different pattern to the undulations in Churchill's popularity. Whilst MO and HI support Taylor's claims about the influence of the military situation, they also suggest that public opinion was far more complex and that Churchill's standing was affected by other issues. The Legend, for example, that was emerging at this time, bore

⁴ Michael Balfour, *Propaganda in War*, (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979) p. 285.

⁵ Paul Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front*, (Pimlico, 1993) p. 334. See also Angus Calder, *The People's War*, (Pimlico, 1999) p. 97.

Churchill through the most turbulent moments of the war. This forms the focus of the section on diplomatic affairs, whilst the duality of public opinion is highlighted in both sections, wherein the public expressed criticisms of Churchill but simultaneously showed great admiration of him. But the freedom to express any criticism at all arose only gradually through the war and was facilitated by criticisms voiced in the House of Commons and in the press. The correlation between press, parliamentary and public opinion is a subsidiary focus of this chapter and is raised here as a precursor to chapter 5.

The Military Situation

As Churchill became First Lord of the Admiralty in 1939, his role as a military leader was clearly set. The press commented on his suitability for the role, but not content to concern himself solely with naval matters, Churchill also made suggestions for wider military engagement and pushed for various operations to bring the war closer to the Germans, such as 'Operation Wilfred', designed to prevent the German export of Swedish iron ore by mining the Leads in Norway.⁶ Officially, Churchill's powers were increased when he became the chair of the War Cabinet's Military Co-ordination Committee in April 1940 which effectively made him Britain's "War Chief".⁷ In reality, this did nothing but burden him with further administrative duties when it became clear to Churchill that the Committee lacked a definite purpose. He therefore set about a programme of reform, suggesting that Chamberlain, as Prime Minister, should chair the Committee when extremely portentous issues were being discussed. This Chamberlain never did but the experience proved to Churchill that a position co-ordinating the three services was essential. Upon his accession to the premiership he therefore assumed the role of Minister of Defence which performed this function and he was "determined to be No. 1 and to use all the political powers of a No. 1 directly".⁸ Churchill thus had a direct hand in all military decisions which, together with his man of action image, eventually came to prove it was indeed "Churchill's War".⁹ His regular statements in the House of

⁶ For more on Churchill's abilities as a strategist see Ronald Lewin, *Churchill as Warlord*, (Batsford, 1974) who is largely sympathetic to Churchill and Tuvye Ben-Moshe, (ed.), *Churchill: Strategy and History* (Lynne Rienner, 1991) who is less so.

⁷ *Daily Express* 4th April 1940.

⁸ Sir Ian Jacob quoted in Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, Vol. VI*, (Heinemann, 1983), p. 325.

⁹ Stephen Spender said this was the opinion of "the ordinary man in England" quoted in Harold Nicolson, *Diaries and Letters 1939-1945*, (edited by Nigel Nicolson, Collins, 1967) 17th August 1942, p. 184. Hereafter Nicolson diary.

Commons which summarised the war situation added to this conception. In addition to providing politicians with details of the supply situation, they also provided a simple review of the battlefronts and the successes and failures for people who had little inclination to keep abreast of the news on a daily basis. Equally, they reinforced the expectations that people had come to have of Churchill's abilities to prophesy the direction the war would take.

The legend of his prophetic abilities developed quickly once his warnings about the Nazi menace in the 1930s had been vindicated, the *Daily Mirror* being especially cogent in this. By 1942, books on Churchill began to carry chapters on Churchill as "Prophet and Premier" and noted how his had been "The Voice in the Wilderness".¹⁰ It was only a small leap therefore to place great faith in Churchill's predictions about the course of the war. This was facilitated by the emergent trust in Churchill's honesty which arose from his giving bad news frankly and 'accurate' figures that supported his announcements. Whilst this may have helped to secure his reputation when he was proved right, it was a different case when he was found out to be wrong, as was the case in 1941.

Fighting in North Africa began in August 1940 when the Italians invaded British Somaliland. This campaign had originally gone well for Britain, when large numbers of prisoners were taken and the Italians were pushed back towards western Libya, generating the hope that the battle for Africa might be brought to a swift conclusion. It was, at this point in the war, the only arena where British troops were proving successful and was thus an important factor in maintaining public morale. However, the arrival of Rommel's Afrika Korps in Libya to rescue the struggling Italians in February 1941 turned the tide against the British. Rommel quickly began to advance eastwards, taking Benghazi on the Libyan coast in April and forcing the British and Empire troops back towards Egypt over ground that had only just been wrested from the Italians. By June, the German forces had pushed into Egypt, but tenacious resistance at Tobruk meant that the port remained in Allied hands. The German onslaught lasted until November when 'Operation Crusader' was launched to relieve the primarily Australian garrison and to destroy all enemy forces in Cyrenaica. Against Churchill's wishes, General Auchinleck

¹⁰ Hugh Martin, *Battle*, (Victor Gollancz, 1942), Esmé Wingfield-Stratford, *Churchill*, (Victor Gollancz, 1942). See also R.H. Kiernan, *Churchill*, (George Harrap, 1942) which carried a chapter entitled "The Prophet in the Wilderness". This shows that Churchill's war memoirs were not solely responsible for the development of the idea, as it is commonly thought. David Reynolds expands on this theme in "Churchill's Writing of History" in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th Series, Vol. 9, 2001, pp. 221-247.

insisted that the campaign be delayed so that supplies might be built up over the course of several weeks. Once the campaign was launched in mid-November 1941, the level of preparedness and the degree to which planning had been done was revealed to the public and stressed in the news, encouraging high expectations for the campaign's success. The newspaper headlines gave the impression the British and Empire forces were unstoppable. The *Daily Express*, for example, carried a daily account with increasingly huge headlines, of how the Allied forces were pushing back the Germans over enormous distances and rejoiced in the large number of prisoners that were being taken.¹¹ Churchill, too, added to the sense of expectancy, outlining in a short statement in the House of Commons the detailed preparations that had gone into the campaign and how, for the first time, British forces were well-matched against those of the Germans.¹²

This offensive has been long and elaborately prepared, and we have waited for nearly five months in order that our Army might be well equipped with all those weapons which have made their mark in this new war...The Desert Army is now favourably situated for a trial of strength...One thing is certain, that all the ranks of the British and Empire troops involved are animated by a long pent up and ardent desire to engage the enemy, and that they will fight with the utmost resolve and devotion, feeling as they do that this is the first time we have met the Germans at least as equally well-armed and equipped, and realising the part which a British victory in Libya would play in the whole course of the war.

Although the speech contained the customary Churchillian warning that "It is far too soon to indulge in any exultation", the general tenor of the speech spread tremendous encouragement amongst the public. HI found, "Churchill's extreme confidence in the outcome of the offensive and his reference to meeting the enemy on equal terms at last is thought to 'commit us to victory' so thoroughly that we are believed to have reason for very considerable optimism in this theatre of war and the public is in a state of elated expectancy."¹³ Hopes were especially high as the offensive in North Africa promised to offer some relief for the beleaguered Russians who had been fighting bitterly since the

¹¹ Successive headlines from the first news of the launch of the campaign in the *Daily Express* were "Britain Attacks: Advance of 50 miles in the rain and we're still going strong" (20th November 1941), "We're still going on" (21st November 1941), "Rommel surrounded", (22nd November 1941), "15,000 taken prisoner. 600 Panzers smashed and rest trapped" (24th November 1941) which indicates the confidence in the offensive.

¹² "The Attack in Libya", House of Commons, 20th November 1941, Churchill, (edited by Charles Eade), *The Unrelenting Struggle*, (Cassell, 1942), pp. 300-1.

¹³ HI Weekly Report, 17th-24th November 1941, INF1/292.

German invasion five months before and whose courage and tenacity deeply affected the British public.¹⁴ It was also the first major offensive the British had undertaken in the war which people had been waiting for since Churchill came to power in 1940 and where the output of the munitions and arms workers might be seen to play a part in the outcome of the war.¹⁵ In addition, Churchill's vague hint that a successful outcome might foreshorten the war also added a sense of expectation, especially as it came from Churchill himself. HI again found:

It is pointed out that 'Britain's War Asset No. 1', as Churchill is now called, has never been given to boasting, and would not have spoken as he did if there were serious doubts about the issue. But even those who have claimed to detect, in his recent utterances, an undercurrent of special optimism, have been surprised by the completeness of our preparations and the sweeping character of the attack.¹⁶

These high hopes were soon shattered. The offensive began to slow and Tobruk was not relieved until 10th December, by which time any good news was overshadowed by the Japanese attacks in the Far East and the second objective of Crusader, to destroy the entire armed forces of the Germans and Italians in Cyrenaica, had failed. Disappointment amongst the public was far-ranging and deeply felt. There was a distinct fall in morale and a feeling of irritation emerged that "we blew the trumpets too soon".¹⁷ Harold Nicolson, now a governor of the BBC, had foreseen this and had written of how:

The press and even the BBC take a very optimistic view of our Libyan offensives. This distresses me, since if things go wrong (as well they may) public opinion will have a bad shock. Winston in the House today...makes the error of proclaiming that this is the first time we have met Germans on equal terms. I dread the forecasts...At the BBC Board I bring up the question of the Libyan bulletins and we damp them down.¹⁸

Nicolson's presentiments were accurate. People felt that "the BBC, the press and even the Prime Minister, have 'hit the news too high' thus running the risk of a slump in

¹⁴ This support for the Russians will be examined in greater detail in the next section.

¹⁵ Mass-Observation, *People in Production*, (Penguin, 1942) pp. 52-54.

¹⁶ HI Weekly Report, 17th-24th November 1941, INF1/292.

¹⁷ HI Weekly Report, 24th November – 1st December 1941, INF1/292.

¹⁸ Nicolson diary, 20th November 1941, pp. 191-92.

morale if hopes do not materialise.”¹⁹ MO agreed that “Few things have affected confidence in our wartime industry more than our no doubt temporary setback in Libya, after such a triumphant verbal beginning...Even an amateur psychologist knows what happens if you tell a person something is going to be nice and it turns out nasty”.²⁰ Churchill proved to be no psychologist. In his defence of the Military Spokesman in Cairo, whose despatches had encouraged high hopes for the outcome of the operation, Churchill spoke of how the British public “liked their food cooked that way”, that is being fed an unmitigated diet of optimistic news.²¹ This contrasted sharply with what MO and HI were discovering about the public, who were more than capable of taking bad news calmly and, indeed, what Churchill himself had said a year earlier.²²

Churchill’s unrealistic appreciation of the spirit of the British public may have contributed to people’s declining confidence in him. The knock his standing received was far from sufficient to remove him from the pedestal on which he was now placed by the emerging Myth of the war, but it did prove to be a crucial juncture in his popularity. The ensuing months saw a deepening of this crisis as military defeats and setbacks mounted with alarming regularity. Operation Crusader became ever more redundant as Rommel’s forces gained further ground across North Africa. Churchill’s explanation in the House of Commons for the failure of the campaign, that the attempt to recapture Cyrenaica “was a battle which turned out to be very different to what was foreseen”, fell lamely upon a disappointed public, although confidence in final victory remained unshaken.²³ The troublesome situation in North Africa, however, was compounded with the events that were unfolding in the Far East. The Japanese attacks on British territories opened up a new theatre of war but also finally brought in the US as a belligerent ally.

Churchill’s pronouncements on the Far Eastern War had been bleak from the outset. His statement in the House of Commons on 8th December, in which he announced attacks on British territory in Malaya, was described by Harold Nicolson as

¹⁹ HI Weekly Report, 24th November – 1st December 1941, INF1/292.

²⁰ Mass-Observation, *People in Production*, p. 52.

²¹ “The War Situation”, House of Commons, 11th December 1941, Churchill, *The Unrelenting Struggle*, pp. 321-330.

²² This featured throughout all MO and HI material. Churchill said, “I always hesitate to say anything of an optimistic nature, because our people do not mind being told the worst”. 8th October 1941, Churchill, (edited by Charles Eade), *Into Battle*, (Cassell, 1941), p 280.

²³ “War Situation”, House of Commons 27th January 1942, Winston Churchill, (edited by Charles Eade), *The End of the Beginning*, (Cassell, 1942) pp. 11-42. HI Weekly Report 26th January-2nd February 1942, INF1/292.

“dull” and “matter-of-fact”.²⁴ Although he optimistically but ingenuously stated that “some of the finest ships in the Royal Navy have reached their destinations in the Far East”, on the whole, the speech was downcast and offered none of the defiance with which Churchill had come to be associated. It was broadcast later the same evening to the world but it caused “considerable disappointment” among the British public.²⁵ People considered it depressing and “in strong contrast to the confidence with which he had challenged Japan some weeks before” and it failed to hold their attention as his earlier speeches had done.²⁶ MO gave a lucid account of people’s behaviour during the broadcast in one café:

Talking carried on a while after Churchill began and then men called for silence. A few still whispered orders to girls who at first ignored them then, turning weary of the broadcast began to serve again on tiptoe. Then one girl boisterously began to rattle beer bottles, she was ‘shushed’ by the men but they were not annoyed with her. Towards the end few were listening and business was in full swing.²⁷

This changing attitude towards Churchill’s speeches, which would become stronger later in the war, reflected how accustomed people had become to Churchill’s rhetoric and also perhaps their alarm at Churchill’s delivery. The *News Chronicle* picked up on the fact that he had looked “old and tired” when he gave the speech in the House of Commons, “as if he had been up a great part of the night” which indeed he had, but his broadcast evidently also betrayed his weariness.²⁸ HI recorded that people thought it to be “the speech of a very tired old man” and that people were worried “lest he should strain himself”.²⁹ As in November 1941 with the Libyan campaign, the public hanged “so much on his utterances that the least hint of uncertainty [gave] rise to speculation”.³⁰

The reaction to the Pearl Harbor speech demonstrates two emerging factors in Churchill’s public image. Firstly, people were becoming increasingly aware of his age. Just eight days before the speech Churchill had celebrated his 67th birthday and was not

²⁴ “War with Japan” speech in House of Commons and later broadcast, 8th December 1941, Churchill, *The Unrelenting Struggle*, pp. 316-319. See Appendix 2 for the text of the speech. Nicolson diary, 8th December 1941, p. 194. To hear the broadcast and Churchill’s uncharacteristic delivery visit <http://www.earthstation1.com/pgs/churchill/dos-wc411208.wav.html>. For the text see Appendix 2.

²⁵ HI Weekly Report 8th-15th December 1941, INF1/292.

²⁶ Ibid. Churchill’s “Warning to Japan” speech at the Lord Mayor’s Day Luncheon, London, 10th November 1941, Churchill, *The Unrelenting Struggle*, pp. 282-286.

²⁷ Angus Calder and Dorothy Sheridan, *Speak for Yourself*, (Jonathan Cape, 1984), p. 140.

²⁸ *News Chronicle* 9th December 1941.

²⁹ HI Weekly Report 8th-15th December 1941, INF1/292.

³⁰ HI Weekly Report 8th-15th December 1941, INF1/292.

so much younger than Chamberlain who, at the age of seventy on the outbreak of war, had been widely considered too old to be Prime Minister.³¹ Interestingly though, misgivings about his age were not taken to be a criticism of his abilities as a leader, rather they were an expression of concern for his health which was to develop further as the stresses of the war intensified. Secondly, public reaction to the speech revealed how quickly the Churchill Legend had developed. His pugnacity and belligerence, for which he was famed in 1939 and 1940, were expected of him still, even when they were circumscribed by events. That he should refrain from fine rhetoric and exuberance in this speech was therefore not welcomed on the whole as it was not what was familiar. HI did, however, feel that people preferred “frankness to attempts to gloss over unpleasant facts” and the one figure whom they trusted to be frank was Churchill.³² Two days later in his announcement of the loss of the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse*, the two principal British ships in the Far East, Churchill did not pretend that the news was inconsequential; on the contrary, he dwelt on the fact that “he did not remember any naval blow so heavy or so painful”.³³ Such a “candid admission that the loss of these vessels was the severest blow ever suffered by the British [was] greatly appreciated”.³⁴ Nevertheless, people were comforted and confidence was restored by his war situation speech of the following day.³⁵ This followed an established pattern of facts, fine – if not necessarily memorable – phrasing and a good measure of confidence despite the setbacks; people seemed to take comfort in the familiar.

Shortly after making the Pearl Harbor speech, Churchill left for America to discuss with Roosevelt the new direction the war had taken and the implications American involvement had on strategy, but his absence coincided with an increasingly grave situation in the Far East. The Japanese advance down the Malay Peninsula was of particular concern to the military chiefs as it threatened Britain’s strongest base in the Far East, Singapore. By the New Year, several British possessions, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Penang had already fallen, all with a certain degree of ignominy. The loss of Penang soon after the Far Eastern War had begun caused the leader writer of the *Daily Mirror* to ask premonitively “whether the guns of Singapore – another island – also only fire in one

³¹ MO FR (hereafter MO FR) 99, *The Political Crisis*, April 1940. Concern about Churchill’s health and age will be examined more closely in the next section.

³² HI Weekly Report 8th-15th December 1941, INF1/292.

³³ “Statement on the loss of the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse*”, 10th December 1941, Churchill, *The Unrelenting Struggle*, p. 320.

³⁴ HI Weekly Report 8th-15th December 1941, INF1/292.

³⁵ War situation speech, 11th December 1941, House of Commons, Churchill, *The Unrelenting Struggle*, pp. 321-330.

direction”.³⁶ As the Japanese advanced down the Malay Peninsula, the press did much to prolong the agony of the situation, cheerily announcing Churchill’s promise that “Singapore will hold”³⁷ but then as the battle raged, ominously counted down the distance of the Japanese forces from Singapore.³⁸ It seems that the lesson in giving over-optimistic reports had been learned, but this was countered by giving extremely detailed reports. Even Churchill was prompted to complain about the Army’s censorship that “they seem to give everything away themselves”.³⁹

The fears about Singapore’s safety were eventually realised when the island was attacked from the Malay Peninsula and the guns were found to be pointing in the wrong direction.⁴⁰ Reports in the press did nothing to lighten the situation. The *Daily Mirror* called the Japanese attack on the island a “battle crisis” and the criticisms which had concentrated on the Government just a few weeks before were rekindled.⁴¹ To parry the disparagement, Churchill appealed for national unity in his broadcast of 15th February and gave an unusually jaded speech.⁴² In it was a passage which condensed all the elements of both the Churchill Legend and the Myth of 1940:

You know I have never prophesied to you or promised smooth and easy things, and now all I have to offer is a hard adverse war for many months ahead. I must warn you, as I warned the House of Commons before they gave me their generous vote of confidence a fortnight ago, that many misfortunes, severe torturing losses, remorseless and gnawing anxieties lie before us...But the same qualities which brought us through the awful jeopardy of the summer of 1940 and its long autumn and winter bombardment from the air, will bring us through this other ordeal, though it may be more costly and will certainly be longer.

On the one hand, Churchill warned of loss and sacrifice and protracted struggle and on the other gave hope of final victory. His reference to 1940 demonstrated how prevalent the Myth had become already by this date and yet by seeking to invoke it showed how the ‘Dunkirk Spirit’ was already lost. The *Daily Express* similarly tried to appeal to

³⁶ *Daily Mirror*, 23rd December 1941.

³⁷ *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Express* headlines, 24th December 1941 and 1st January 1942

³⁸ The *Daily Mirror*, for example, noted as its main headline, “Town 150 miles from Singapore captured say Japs”. 15th January 1942.

³⁹ Churchill’s memorandum to the Secretary of State for War and the Minister of Information 30th January 1942 quoted in Gilbert *Winston S. Churchill* Vol. VII, p. 52.

⁴⁰ See Raymond Callahan “The Illusion of Security: Singapore 1919-42” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 9, No. 2., April, 1974, pp. 69-92 for more on the military and strategic organisation of the defence of Singapore.

⁴¹ *Daily Mirror* 15th February 1942.

⁴² “Through the Storm” broadcast 15th February 1942, Churchill, *The End of the Beginning*, pp. 50-56.

people's nostalgia and pride in 1940, calling it "the greatest year in the history of this land".⁴³ It continued, "The deeds of that year, men and women of Britain, were not the doing of your far off famous ancestors who made this Empire. They were yours. Performed by you and the present leader". In spite of this broad-ranged appeal, the broadcast had "an exceptionally bad reception".⁴⁴ Over half the people interviewed by MO made unfavourable remarks about the broadcast compared with just two per cent who had criticised previous broadcasts. The reason MO explained, was that he failed to address the issues that were "exercising the public mind", just as Chamberlain had failed in his broadcast just before he lost power.⁴⁵ Harold Nicolson thought "the country was too nervous and irritable to be fobbed off with fine phrases", although HI found more of a mixed reaction.⁴⁶ Some people found it a "steadying influence", but a number thought that it did "not succeed in allaying criticism".⁴⁷

The same week that saw the fall of Singapore, three German ships, the *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau* and the *Prinz Eugen*, escaped through the English Channel. Despite a determined effort by the combined forces of the RAF and the Navy, the ships remained undetected until safely beyond the Channel and were able to return to Wilhelmshaven from Brest.⁴⁸ Whilst the press stressed the valour of the British forces in their attempts to stop the ships, the public were deeply disturbed by the incident and Henry Channon thought that "The country is more upset about the escape of the German battleships than over Singapore...The capital seethes with indignation...I've never known such a violent outburst".⁴⁹ Churchill's failure to mention the incident extended the criticisms of his speeches first made in December and although the battleship incident took precedence over Singapore in his next statement to the House of Commons two days later, the damage had been done.⁵⁰

During the week of the *Scharnhorst* incident, personal criticism of Churchill began to surface. The *Daily Mail*, for example, carried a violently anti-Churchill leader, the first

⁴³ *Daily Express* 15th February 1942.

⁴⁴ MO FR 1111, *Opinion on Cabinet Changes*, 24th February 1942.

⁴⁵ See Chapter 2: 1940.

⁴⁶ Nicolson diary, 15th February 1942, p. 212.

⁴⁷ HI Weekly Report 16th-23rd February 1942, INF1/292.

⁴⁸ There had been 110 air raids on the ships as they sheltered in Brest and once spotted in the Channel, 242 bombers were mustered together with numerous Navy ships, aircraft and submarines. In spite of this concerted effort, the ships were only damaged and were able to return to safety.

⁴⁹ Henry Channon, (Edited by Robert Rhodes James), *Chips: the Diaries of Sir Henry Channon*. (Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1967), 13th February 1942, p.321. Hereafter Channon diary. Harold Nicolson agreed with Channon. Nicolson diary, 16th February 1942, p. 211.

⁵⁰ "The War Situation", House of Commons, 17th February 1942, Churchill, *The End of the Beginning*, pp. 57-61.

that had ever appeared during the war.⁵¹ HI found this sense of defeatism had spread to the public who were deeply concerned about the efficacy of the direction of the war effort. HI wrote, "The desire to criticise was widespread...the main weight of public criticism seems to be directed against the Government, and no longer excludes the Prime Minister".⁵² This was the first time that this distinction between Churchill and the Government had been blurred and marked a significant turn in Churchill's popularity. Criticism was reported from every region of the country although it was directed primarily at Churchill's capacity as Minister of Defence rather than as Prime Minister. His explanation of the escape of the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* on 17th February did little to convince people that the best efforts had been made to stop them and it was felt that he had failed in his role as a military strategist and that he should leave military and naval decisions to the experts.⁵³ His position was now the complete opposite from that of 1939-40 when the press and public held him responsible only for military successes; now he was held to blame only for the defeats. Fears of his dictatorial nature were also beginning to emerge, but at this stage, it was out of concern for his health. His failure to delegate, people felt, meant that he took on too much and people thought he was "a poor old man with too much to do at his age".⁵⁴ Churchill's speeches too failed to have the magic effect that they were now 'remembered' to have had in 1940. MO thought the "flatness people are finding in his oratory" was possibly the most important factor in the falling popularity of Churchill. "Gratitude for this speeches in the past seems to have keyed people up to expect great and moving speeches every time, the breaking of this oratorical spell is thus a shock and a disappointment".⁵⁵

In reviving such criticisms it is easy to assume that Churchill was deeply unpopular at this moment. Although the opinion polls showed an 82 and 81 per cent popularity rating in February and March respectively, these figures were somewhat lower than the more usual 89 per cent he had gained in January and were the second lowest point of the war. Criticisms of Churchill in the press clearly had made it more acceptable to voice critical comments but there was still social compunction to show support as well as a genuine undercurrent of admiration for his leadership. Public opinion was becoming paradoxical and confused. Where MO found favourable comments about him, they were often tempered by remarks such as "I think he's alright, but he's got a

⁵¹ *Daily Mail* 13th February 1942.

⁵² HI Weekly Report 9th-16th February 1942, INF/292.

⁵³ HI Weekly Report 16th-23rd February 1942, INF1/292.

⁵⁴ MO FR 1111, *Opinion on Cabinet Changes*, 24th February 1942.

⁵⁵ MO FR 1207, *Prestige of Great Leaders*, 16th April 1942.

finger in every pie”.⁵⁶ In conclusion, MO wrote, “Churchill is still the unchallenged leader of British people, but it is clear that the events of the past two months have given people second thoughts about him”.⁵⁷ This vacillation continued through the spring and the summer of 1942.

In May Churchill broadcast again but rather than it being a catalogue of positive outcomes which tried vainly to counteract bad news, the speech was buoyant and sparkled with Churchillian brilliance that had been missing for some time.⁵⁸ In it he raked over the ground of 1940 and all of its now mythologised sentiments of endurance and determination:

We were left alone – our quarter of a million Dunkirk troops saved, only disarmed, ourselves as yet unarmed...All the world, even our best friends thought that our end had come. Accordingly, we prepared ourselves to conquer or perish. We were united in that solemn majestic hour.

He added too to his own centrality of the majestic hour that, “It fell to me in those days to express the sentiments and resolves of the British nation in that supreme crisis of its life”. He went on to laud praise on the Russians for their staunchness and bravery in the face of the invading German army but characteristically warning of the worst, indicated that the war may escalate with the use of poison gas. On a more positive note, he spoke of the Allies’ potential to open a second front to relieve the Russians. The broadcast received the most effusive praise from the public than any other speech thus far in the war. From every region HI found reports of:

general and enthusiastic approval for what is in many cases referred to as ‘the Prime Minister’s greatest speech’...the general effect of the speech appears to have been to increase confidence, to slim the militant spirit of the people, to silence large number of those who have been fretting at our apparent inaction in recent months and to re-establish Mr. Churchill as the national leader of the people at this time.⁵⁹

It was especially praised for his reference to the second front, his defiance against the bombing truce proposals and his warning to the press not to speculate too wildly about Madagascar lest they reveal operational intentions. These issues, especially the second

⁵⁶ MO FR 1111, *Opinion on Cabinet Changes*, 24th February 1942.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ “Prime Minister for Two Years” broadcast, 10th May 1942, Churchill, *The End of the Beginning*, pp. 100-107. See Appendix 2 for the text of the speech.

⁵⁹ HI Weekly Report 4th-11th May 1942, INF1/292.

front, were at the forefront of people's minds and Churchill's addressing them served to popularise both the speech and Churchill himself. Whenever he – or indeed any other politician – failed to heed the public's concerns, popularity fell accordingly, as was the case with Churchill's previous broadcast and Chamberlain's broadcast in May 1940. But on this occasion, Churchill managed to address all the themes which made the speech popular and thus returned to a familiar pattern and "Any doubts about his popularity are now said to have been swept away".⁶⁰

This hiatus in a declining popularity amongst the public was not shared with the House of Commons. Harold Nicolson wrote of how the Commons debate on the 20th May consisted of "one long stab and dig at Winston...I fear that Winston's position in the House (in spite of his triumph in the secret session) is not a strong one".⁶¹ Channon agreed and recorded that there was "so much political plotting at the moment, and of course the chief instigator is Max Beaverbrook".⁶² The press retained an icy approach from which it was easy to return to the tumult of censure when the military situation in Africa became precarious once again.

At the end of May 1942, Rommel launched a new offensive in North Africa in a further attempt to take Tobruk. Just as the press had been optimistic about Operation Crusader the previous November, the newspapers were again full of accounts of how easily the Allies could defeat the Germans and once again public optimism ran high.⁶³ A week before Tobruk fell, the reports had become less optimistic, nevertheless the news still came as a tremendous shock to the public. It "dominated people's thoughts" and largely depressed spirits.⁶⁴ Cripps, now Lord Privy Seal, wrote to Churchill warning of the "grave disturbance in the country" which was bound by "a very widespread sense of frustration".⁶⁵ He blamed this principally on the over optimistic reports that had stemmed from Cairo and which had been contained in the press. But Churchill was also blamed by the public. "The Government as a whole and the Prime Minister in particular are being criticised for the present turn of events. The fact that Mr. Churchill and General Ritchie"⁶⁶ both gave the impression that all was well seems to have upset people

⁶⁰ HI Weekly Report, 11th-18th May 1942, INF1/292.

⁶¹ Nicolson diary, 20th May 1942, p. 226.

⁶² Channon diary, 21st May 1942, p. 331.

⁶³ The *Daily Express* was the most optimistic of the popular press. Headlines highlighted how the Germans had been pushed back in the desert: "Panzers lose initiative to RAF" (29th May), "Rommel withdraws through gaps" (2nd June), "British smash through to Bir Hakem" (6th June).

⁶⁴ HI Weekly Report, 16th-23rd June 1942, INF1/292.

⁶⁵ Cripps to Churchill, 2nd July 1942, CHAR20/56.

⁶⁶ Replaced General Cunningham as Commander of the Eighth Army in November 1941.

more than anything else”.⁶⁷ Once again, poor management of people’s expectations caused widespread resentment. However, that people should blame Churchill for building up hopes of a successful campaign simply demonstrated their reliance on him as a messenger. Churchill made only one statement on Libya between January and 21st June when Tobruk fell and this was simply to read out General Auchinleck’s telegrams in the House of Commons.⁶⁸ It is true that these were very optimistic and lessened the impact of Allied losses whilst maximising damage done to the Axis, but for the public to blame Churchill rather than Auchinleck was unjustified. Only the *Daily Mirror* reported the statement and commented that it contained two very encouraging observations and that it marked “what we all hope will be the turning of the tide”.⁶⁹ Churchill’s conclusion “that we have every reason to be satisfied, and more than satisfied, with the course which the battle has so far taken” was based on the information to hand and came before Rommel broke out of his defensive positions at Gazala. Churchill made no further statements on North Africa, being away in America, until the debate on 1st and 2nd July.⁷⁰ This shows once again the extent to which people relied on each of Churchill’s utterances, even to the point of inventing them in the absence of anything more tangible.

Churchill, therefore, served as the scapegoat following the loss of Tobruk. He could hardly have been fairly accused of misleading the nation given his scant attention to the issue in public beforehand, yet a week later there was still a “storm of criticism about the way the public [had] been mislead...Churchill’s words and the King’s congratulations [were] thought to show that our intelligence must have been hopeless”.⁷¹ Nevertheless, at the same time it was realised that “he is the only man we have capable of leading the nation”.⁷² Even after the vote of confidence on 2nd July and, in spite of the political invective which the debate generated, he still “inspired widespread loyalty” amongst the public and was the “obvious leader of the people”.⁷³ Here, then, within a week, blame was gradually being moved away from Churchill and on to the other scapegoat of military intelligence: calumny could not stick to Churchill for very long.

In these circumstances Balfour’s ‘record low’ of 78 per cent approval rating can be explained simply: bitter disappointment in the events in North Africa, especially after

⁶⁷ HI Weekly Report, 16th–23rd June 1942, INF1/292.

⁶⁸ “The Battle in Libya” speech, House of Commons 2nd June 1942, Churchill, *The End of the Beginning*, pp. 114–118.

⁶⁹ *Daily Mirror* 3rd June 1942.

⁷⁰ The vote of no confidence will be examined further in Chapter 5.

⁷¹ HI Weekly Report 23rd–30th June 1942, INF1/292.

⁷² HI Weekly Report 23–30th June 1942, INF1/292.

⁷³ HI Weekly Report 30th June–7th July 1942, INF1/292.

such a long battle, coupled with the vocal censure in the House of Commons gave sanction to criticism of Churchill which was mirrored in BIPO's result. Those who may have long nursed resentment or disapproval of Churchill were suddenly given the opportunity to voice their displeasure without fear of incurring anyone's disapproval. Despite this freedom, there was still a strong undercurrent of support for him. So rather than the occasion marking the lowest point in Churchill's popularity, June and July 1942 simply marked a greater freedom to express diverse opinions whilst also revealing how utterly dependent people were on him and his leadership.

Similar explanations had lain behind the second lowest point in Churchill's BIPO ratings in March 1942. Once again, this had followed a serious military set back, the fall of Singapore and the escape of the German battleships. The military implications of Singapore may not have been understood by the public but, like Tobruk, the loss followed a protracted struggle whilst the *Scharnhorst* incident seemed to confirm what people were already suspicious of, that there was military incompetence and bungling at all levels of Government. By February 1942, this criticism of the Government no longer excluded Churchill and the press no longer felt the need to withhold criticism, thus for the first time in over two years, the public also felt able to vocalise their concerns and recriminations without fear of being unpatriotic. The same sanction was given in July 1942 enabling BIPO to identify such a 'low' popularity rating. That this was still 78 per cent suggests, however, that there was still a widespread body of support, which hinged upon Churchill's utter indispensability and the public's gratitude for his leadership in 1940.

If the lowest points of Churchill's BIPO ratings occurred following significant military defeats, then it is equally true that the highest points came after important military successes. Following the turbulence of the first six months of 1942 there came a marked and progressive improvement in Churchill's standing according to BIPO whilst the highest point followed the launch of Operation Torch on 28th October 1942. The first two weeks of this campaign saw unprecedented successes with over 20,000 prisoners taken along with 350 tanks, 400 guns and several thousand motor transports.⁷⁴ Confident of victory, Churchill famously ordered the church bells to be rung in celebration for the first time since the outbreak of war.⁷⁵ The public thought it to be

⁷⁴ Telegram General Alexander, who replaced Auchinleck as Commander of the Eighth Army, to Churchill 6th November 1942, quoted in Gilbert *Winston S. Churchill* Vol. VII, p. 250.

⁷⁵ Although originally ordered to be rung on Sunday 8th November this was postponed until 15th when success was certain. Nicolson diary footnote, p. 260. Announced in the House of Commons by

“the best week of the war” and Churchill immortalised the event with his characteristic words of warning: “This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning”.⁷⁶ This speech, and his statement in the House of Commons, caught the mood of the moment and all reports were full of praise and for the “immense tonic” they provided.⁷⁷ But more telling of the public’s spirits was the fact that “Mr. Churchill’s prestige [was] said to have reached its highest level”.⁷⁸ The victory in Africa in May 1943 also saw Churchill’s popularity swell and the impetus of successful military ventures was maintained throughout the summer with landings in Sicily and the ultimate downfall of Mussolini at the end of July.⁷⁹ Churchill’s broadcast on the changing regime in Italy outlined the problem which it might present the Allies, namely in marshalling a ‘liberated’ country.⁸⁰ His conclusion, to let the Italians “stew in their own juice for a bit” delighted the British public, showing how homely phrases had a much greater immediate impact than did the grand phrases for which he became famous.⁸¹

The correlation between the military situation and public morale is indicated in a chart of morale produced by HI towards the end of the war (Figure 39).⁸² Here, events in North Africa, on the Russian front and on the continent following the invasion in 1944 were seen to contribute most fully to the undulations in the public’s spirits.⁸³ But morale was also a factor in Churchill’s standing and a comparison of the two show a striking correlation (Figure 40): for every dip in morale there is a corresponding dip in Churchill’s popularity and equally, for every rise in morale there is a boost to Churchill’s standing. Through this, the influence of the military situation on Churchill’s popularity

Churchill 11th November, “War Situation” speech, House of Commons, 11th November 1942, Churchill, *The End of the Beginning* p. 231.

⁷⁶ HI Weekly Report 4th-10th November 1942, INF1/292. “The End of the Beginning”, Mansion House, 10th November 1942, Churchill, *The End of the Beginning*, pp. 212-16.

⁷⁷ “War situation” speech, House of Commons, 11th November 1942, Churchill, *The End of the Beginning*, pp. 218-233. HI Weekly Report 10th-17th November 1942, INF1/292.

⁷⁸ HI Weekly Report 10th-17th November 1942, INF1/292.

⁷⁹ Mussolini was stripped of office by King Victor Emmanuel and put under arrest on 25th July. Marshal Badoglio, an anti-Fascist, was made Prime Minister, leaving the situation in Italy precarious. The Italian surrender followed on 3rd September.

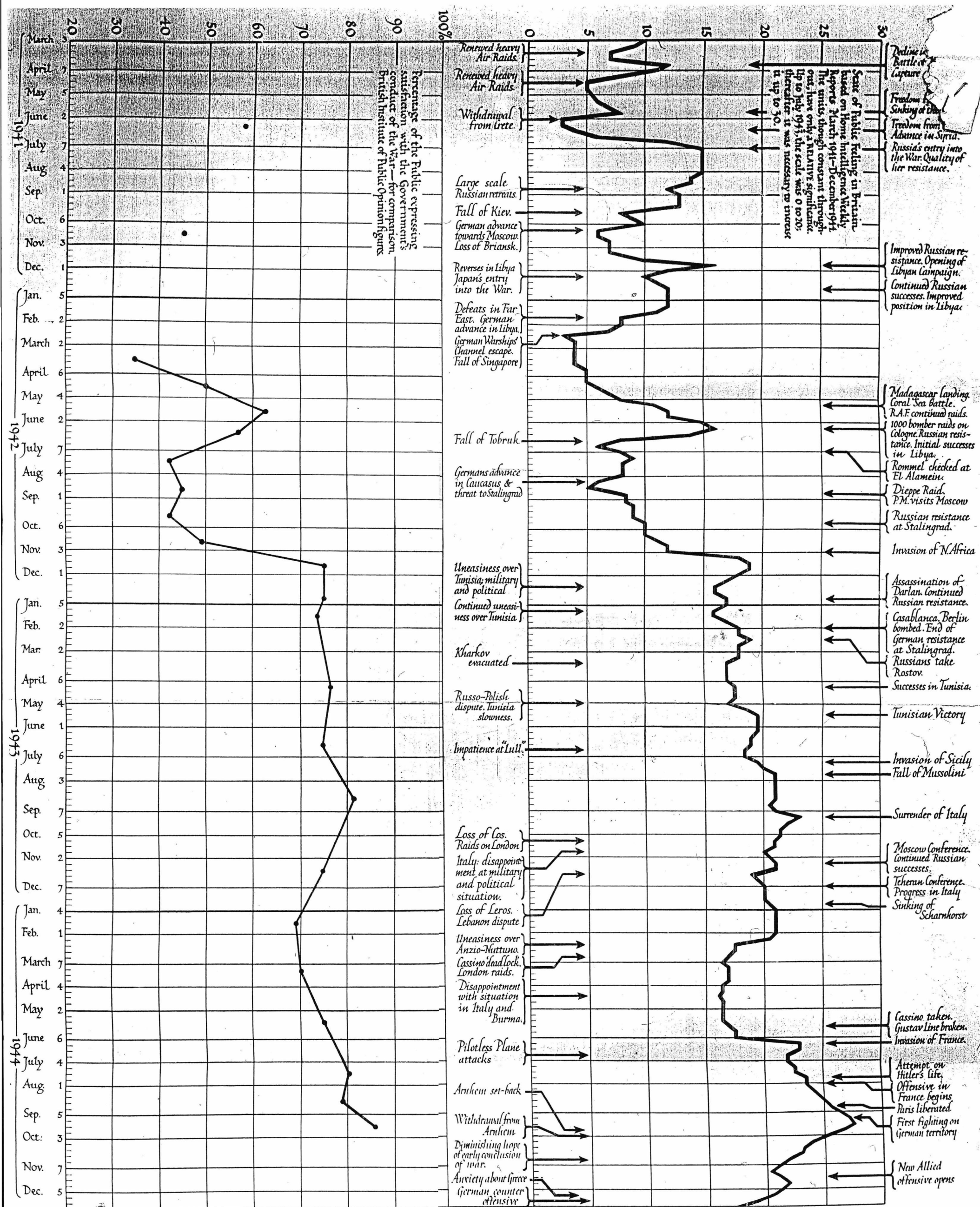
⁸⁰ “The Fall of Mussolini” broadcast 27th July 1943, Winston Churchill, (edited by Charles Eade) *Onwards to Victory* (Cassell, 1944) pp. 142-147.

⁸¹ HI Weekly report 27th July - 3rd August 1943, INF1/292.

⁸² Siân Nicholas argues that the charts were not very accurate, “there is no evidence that these drops in morale were accompanied by waves of defeatism” (*The Echo of War*, (Manchester University Press, 1996) p.4) which is true, but this reflects the polarisation of the debate on morale, wherein it is assessed whether or not morale reached breaking point. (See also Robert Mackay, *Half the Battle*, Manchester University Press, 2002). The charts have been used here to demonstrate undulations in people’s ‘spirits’, that is how people’s moods affected their perceptions of events and people.

⁸³ Note that the ‘Forgotten’ 14th Army in India and Burma, the exploits of the RAF, the Navy and the American forces were not viewed as being influential.

Figure 39: Home Intelligence Morale Chart, INF1/251



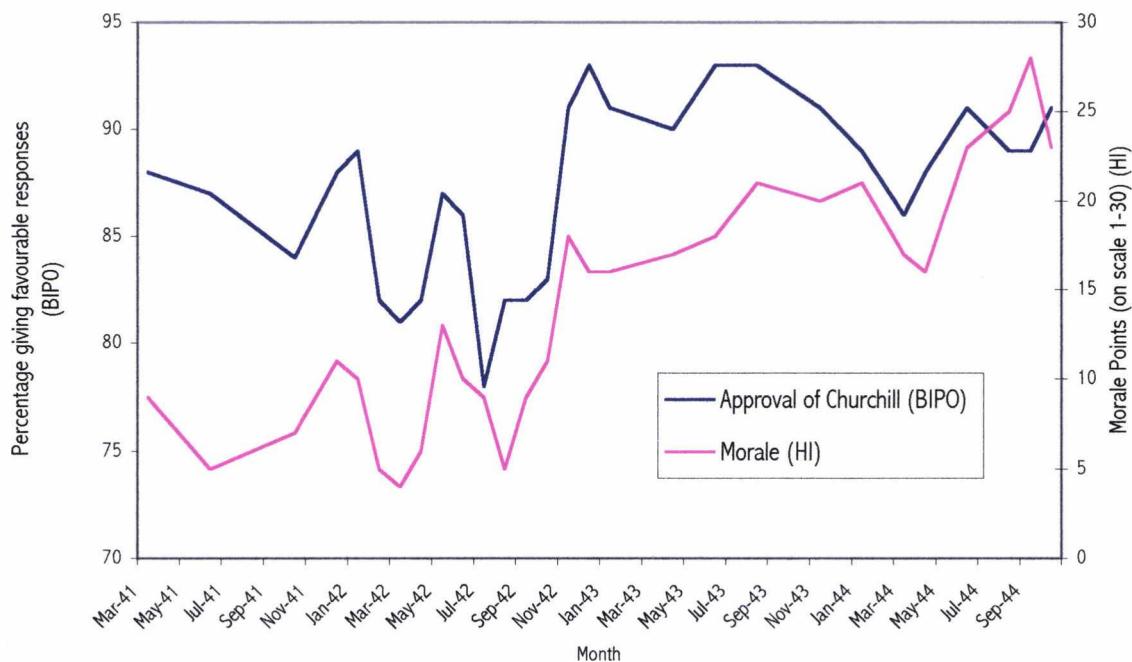


Figure 40 Comparison of morale and approval of Churchill

can be seen. MO agreed that this was an important part of Churchill’s reputation.⁸⁴ It also explains the higher ratings Churchill received through the first part of 1943 when the military campaign began to turn unequivocally in the Allies’ favour for the first time in four years. The exception to this occurred shortly after the D-Day landings in 1944 when morale and Churchill’s BIPO rating diverged. Clearly by this date Churchill’s standing with the public was also affected by other factors besides the ebb and flow of battle, factors which had been gradually emerging through the course of the war. These provide the foci of the remaining sections and the next chapter.

Diplomatic Relations

The horizons of the war expanded considerably with the German attack on Russia in June 1941 and then with the Japanese attacks in the Far East in December which ensured American involvement in the war. These expanding battlefronts demanded greater degrees of planning and co-operation between the Allies, at the forefront of which was

⁸⁴ MO FR 1545 *Bulletin No. 1*, December 1942.

Churchill himself.⁸⁵ Churchill's career as an international figure really began in August 1941 with the first of his many trips to Roosevelt to discuss strategy and the nature of the alliance between Britain and America, the so-called Atlantic Meeting. As co-operation between the Allies became increasingly crucial so did the import of the meetings. His dealings with Roosevelt and Stalin embodied an international unity which proved to be the envy of domestic politics. But Churchill's visits abroad not only had diplomatic repercussions, they also became a vital part of who Churchill was and what he represented.

For the majority of the British people the intricacies of international diplomacy remained a mystery and they remained largely ignorant of the various alliances and motivations upon which diplomacy rested.⁸⁶ As Harold Nicolson had written euphemistically some years before, "The British public have not yet acquired the habit of judgement in regard to foreign policy"⁸⁷ and there was little reason to suppose that they had developed a sudden and thorough interest in the meantime. Very simplistically, America was appreciated for its material contributions to the war effort whilst other allies (with the exception of Russia) and diplomatic issues held little or no interest.⁸⁸ Even the concerted efforts of the MoI in its Empire campaign failed to inspire interest in the Empire and Commonwealth among the British public.⁸⁹ Russia, however, came to attract a great deal of support, both for the tenacity of its fighting men and women and for the contrast it seemed to provide to British inefficiency.⁹⁰ The news of the German attack on Russia in June 1941 had found the British public "jubilant" and it had "a strong tonic effect on the morale of those who had previously shown signs of war weariness".⁹¹ Here at last was an ally who would share the burden of German aggression and who might provide a route to victory which seemed to be sadly lacking amongst British efforts. There was, however, some doubt about the efficacy of the Soviet Army in

⁸⁵ For example, Warren F. Kimball, *Forged in War*, (W. Morrow, 1987). David Carlton, *Churchill and the Soviet Union*, (Manchester University Press, 2000).

⁸⁶ For this reason other diplomatic concerns of the war, such as India and Greece, have not been addressed here.

⁸⁷ Harold Nicolson, "British Public Opinion and Foreign Policy" in *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1937, pp. 53-63.

⁸⁸ Work on America has tended to concentrate more on diplomacy rather than the public's opinion of America, but see David Reynolds, *Rich Relations* (Harper Collins, 1995), especially pp. 35-37 and Ian Jarvie, "Anti-American Reaction to Operation Burma" in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1981, pp. 117-137.

⁸⁹ See Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale*, (Allen and Unwin, 1979) pp. 223-224.

⁹⁰ For a fuller picture of the public's embrace of all things Russian see P.M.H. Bell, *John Bull and the Bear* (Edward Arnold, 1990). For more on diplomacy see Martin Kitchen, *British Policy Towards the Soviet Union During the Second World War* (Macmillan, 1986).

⁹¹ HI Weekly Report 18th-25th June 1942, INF1/292.

repelling the invaders, as its record in Finland in the winter of 1939-1940 did not promise much. This soon proved to be wrong and although the Germans did advance considerably, the opposition put up by the Russians heartened the British public and within a month, Soviet resistance was even beginning to generate a feeling of complacency.⁹²

From the outset, sympathy with Russia was high and Churchill's pledge to give "all aid to Russia" in his broadcast on the invasion was accepted as a "practical and logical move" by the public.⁹³ Indeed, the story carried such weight that his pledge filled the headlines in all the major newspapers and spurred requests for increased production of armaments that would be shipped to Russia.⁹⁴ Beaverbrook's 'Tanks for Russia' campaign, like his earlier 'Pots to Planes' drive, found considerable success. Personal letters of congratulations were sent to factories which outstripped previous production figures and appeals were made to the wider public in Clementine Churchill's 'Aid to Russia' fund. Within the first twelve days of the launch of the Fund, it had collected £370,000 and sent substantial medical supplies to Russia indicating the level of public interest.⁹⁵ Further appeals were made throughout the war and were often covered in the media giving the Fund a newsworthy status amidst the tumult of war.⁹⁶ The MoI also joined in with the pro-Russian fervour, lending its resources to Clementine's fund,⁹⁷ using the public's sympathy to try to promote fuel economy,⁹⁸ and organising pageants promoting the Soviet Union.⁹⁹ By March 1942, appearances of Stalin in newsreels were often met with "a loud and prolonged burst of applause" and one HI correspondent was surprised to see the "difference between the applause of when our Prime Minister appeared on the screen; it was very feeble compared to Stalin".¹⁰⁰ Thus the public's love

⁹² HI Weekly Report 9th-16th July 1941, INF1/292.

⁹³ Churchill's "The Fourth Climacteric" broadcast 22nd June 1941, Churchill, *The Unrelenting Struggle*, pp. 176- 180. See Appendix 2 for the text of the speech. HI Weekly Report 18th-25th June 1941, INF1/292.

⁹⁴ HI Weekly Report 18th-25th June 1941, INF1/292. The *Daily Express*, *Daily Mirror*, *News Chronicle* and *Daily Herald* all carried headlines of Churchill's pledge, 22nd January 1941.

⁹⁵ For further details of the Fund's aid see Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, Vol. VI, p. 1210, n. 3.

⁹⁶ For example, Clementine Churchill at a charity dance, *Daily Express* 6th January 1942 and her at a charity football match, *Paramount* newsreel, "Uniforms Take a Holiday" 22nd January 1942.

⁹⁷ The MoI, for example, agreed to help with an exhibition arranged by the Firemen's Artists' Organising Committee. Minutes of the Executive Board, 27th March 1943, INF1/73.

⁹⁸ For example, the "Moscow Standard" reminded people that Russian winters were far colder and appealed to the patriotic citizen to save fuel accordingly. Anthony Osley, *Persuading the People*, (HMSO, 1995) p. 78.

⁹⁹ Bell, *John Bull and the Bear*, and McLaine, *Ministry of Morale*, both point out that these pageants were instigated simply to steal the thunder from the Communist party. See also Steve Nicholson, "Theatrical Pageants in the Second World War" in *Theatre Research International*, Vol. 18, No. 3, Autumn 1993, pp. 186-196 for more detail on individual pageants.

¹⁰⁰ HI Special Report, *Film Correspondents' Reports on Newsreels*, 23rd March 1942, INF1/293.

affair with Russia began and constant demands were made throughout the war that Churchill's promise of *all* aid be forthcoming.¹⁰¹

Of course, appreciation of the Soviet Union had diverse political implications for both the public and the Government but as became clear, an embrace of the Soviet Union was not necessarily an embrace of Communism.¹⁰² Churchill himself was quite careful to distinguish between the two. His deep-rooted antagonism of Communism had long been known to the public and in his broadcast address concerning the German invasion of Russia he made no attempt to disguise these feelings. "The Nazi regime", he said, "is indistinguishable from the worst features of Communism...no-one has been a more consistent opponent of Communism than I have for the past twenty-five years" and added defiantly, "I will unsay no word of it". The broadcast was "received with such warm approval that it is said to have 'quelled a rising tide of criticism and doubt about the higher direction of the war' " whilst his "use of the word 'guttersnipe' [in describing Hitler] appealed to almost all classes".¹⁰³ Churchill's speech became the main principle behind British foreign policy to Russia, although no-one other than Churchill had a hand in its adoption, for there was relatively little time between the receipt of the news of invasion and Churchill's broadcast. Indeed Churchill only finished writing it twenty minutes before he went on the air making it impossible for anyone to check it.¹⁰⁴ The difficulties posed by a prospective alliance with the Soviet Union were appreciated by the public who thought that he "discharged a difficult task well", especially after his "voiced contempt and at times abhorrence, for the Bolshevik regime".¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, people still commented on his "alleged insincerity" and wondered "if he can get away with it".¹⁰⁶ John Colville also pointed out his apparent reversal in principle but Churchill replied simply that, "he had only one single purpose – the destruction of Hitler – and his life was much simplified thereby. If Hitler invaded Hell he would at least make a favourable reference to the Devil!"¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ Although Churchill did his utmost to uphold his pledge, the Chiefs of Staff, certainly in the first few months of Operation Barbarossa, obstructed aid, expecting the imminent collapse of the Soviet Union. See Ismay, *Memoirs*, pp. 223 and 225.

¹⁰² For more on the British public and Communism see McLaine, *Ministry of Morale*, pp. 186-216.

¹⁰³ HI Weekly Report 25th June-2 July 1941, INF1/292.

¹⁰⁴ John Colville, *Fringes of Power*, (Hodder and Staughton, 1985) 22nd June 1941, p. 405. Hereafter Colville diary. See Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, Vol. VI, pp. 1117-1122 for more on the way in which the policy formed throughout the day and the arguments it caused that evening.

¹⁰⁵ HI Weekly Report 18th-25th June 1941, INF1/292.

¹⁰⁶ MO FR 749, *Further Notes on Hore-Belisha and Churchill*, 23rd June 1941.

¹⁰⁷ Colville diary, 21st June 1941, p. 404. Churchill's post-war opinion of Russia was less benevolent. See Churchill *The Second World War: The Grand Alliance* especially pp. 33-339.

By September 1941, the situation in Russia looked critical with German incursions deep into Soviet territory and HI noted failing morale among the public and “growing dissatisfaction...with the quantity and quality of help which we have so far given our ally”.¹⁰⁸ A BIPO poll in October found only 29 per cent of people felt that Britain had done everything possible to help Russia, compared with 49 per cent who felt it had not.¹⁰⁹ Amongst the public it was thought that “certain elements in the Government” were responsible for the lethargy with which help was being sent, and there was “suspicion that some Ministers are not too enthusiastic about the collaboration with the Russians”.¹¹⁰ Churchill, however, was considered “far ahead of his Cabinet” in his willingness to embrace the Soviet Union as an ally. In this, the distinction between Churchill and other members of the Government that had originally been made in the summer of 1940 still held currency.¹¹¹

The degree to which the public took watchful note of Churchill’s opinion of Russia was reflected in the public’s reaction to the Moore-Brabazon incident at the beginning of September 1941. Colonel Moore-Brabazon, the Minister for Aircraft Production, had stated in an extempore speech that he hoped Nazi Germany and Russia would exterminate each other and in spite of his fervent public support for the Soviet Union, Churchill quietly concurred with these sentiments. HI found that even though people usually lost interest in political issues within a week, a month later the controversy had “not yet died out of public discussion”.¹¹² Among the working population it was still being discussed up to seven weeks afterwards.¹¹³ The length of time which the Moore-Brabazon incident occupied people’s thoughts revealed how deeply their admiration of Russia went and how little criticism would be tolerated. But it also showed how people expected Churchill to be the champion of Russia’s cause and for him to favour it in his foreign policy. But whilst some people were expressing their concerns about Churchill’s attitude to Russia, HI also uncovered a deep seam of support for him.

Churchill’s war situation speech on 30th September dwelt on British aid to Russia and did a great deal to alleviate some of the criticism about the Moore-Brabazon incident.¹¹⁴ The speech was a true demonstration of Churchill’s skills as a rhetorician:

¹⁰⁸ HI Weekly Report 15th-22nd September 1941, INF1/292. See also Figure 3, INF1/291.

¹⁰⁹ BIPO poll, October 1941, in *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Spring 1942, p. 156.

¹¹⁰ HI Weekly Report 22nd-29th September 1941, INF1/292.

¹¹¹ HI Weekly Report 22nd-29th September 1941, INF1/292.

¹¹² HI Weekly Report 29th September-6th October 1941, INF1/292.

¹¹³ HI Weekly Report 13th-21st October 1941, INF1/292.

¹¹⁴ “War Situation” speech, House of Commons, 30th September 1941, Churchill, *The Unrelenting Struggle*, pp. 258-266. HI Weekly Report 29th September - 6th October 1941, INF1/292.

throughout it he indicated the relative weakness of the British Army, the constant threat of invasion, and the power of the German forces, yet even the “more sober opinions” felt it to be “unexpectedly cheerful considering the gravity of the situation”.¹¹⁵ Once again people, especially “the high proportion of facile optimists who [thought] the war [would] be over by Christmas”, found precisely what they wanted to find in Churchill’s speech – optimistic prognoses even when they were not there.¹¹⁶ Similar to Churchill’s invented statements regarding Tobruk in June 1942, it indicated how people’s expectations were more influential on their perception of Churchill than were his actual words. It also showed how praise could exist concomitantly with the doubts about his handling of the Moore-Brabazon affair.

The public’s near obsession with Russia placed certain demands on Churchill to be seen to be doing the utmost to help. Following the Japanese attacks in the Far East, for example, Churchill immediately went to Washington to discuss the new war with Roosevelt. Some people, however, criticised him that he had not gone – and indeed had never – gone to see Stalin.¹¹⁷ In order to show a united front, Churchill insisted that Eden proceed with his long-planned trip to Moscow, despite Eden’s protestations he should be at home at such a critical time.¹¹⁸ The public very much appreciated this gesture.¹¹⁹

The assault on Russia created a demand for a second front to be opened up to relieve some of the pressure on the Red Army. Whilst Churchill maintained that North Africa, and ultimately the invasion of Italy, should provide this diversion for German forces, the public would only recognise an invasion of the continent for this purpose. Stalin had requested the opening of a front as early as July 1941 in his first communication to Churchill after the German invasion had been launched, but Churchill realised this was not only foolhardy but also impossible.¹²⁰ North Africa had to be secured to release sufficient troops to enable a landing on the continent, and even once America had entered the war, this consideration still precluded a second front in 1942. Shortages of landing craft, aircraft, tanks, and even basic guns added further obstacles. Churchill’s constant explanations on the subject did little to deter the demand. Thus

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Colville diary, 1st September 1941, p. 436.

¹¹⁷ HI Weekly Report 22nd-29th December 1941, INF1/292.

¹¹⁸ Earl of Avon, *The Eden Memoirs*, (Cassell, 1965) p. 285.

¹¹⁹ HI Weekly Report 22nd-29th December 1941, INF1/292.

¹²⁰ Telegram Stalin to Churchill, 9th July 1941, CAB 65/19, CAB 67/1. For the details of Cabinet level discussions see George Bruce, *Second Front Now!* (Macdonald, 1979). For more on the diplomatic problems concerning a second front see Gilbert *Winston S. Churchill* Vol. VII (several references).

when he explained that he would not enter into a debate on the subject of the second front since any affirmation in either direction would be “giving altogether gratuitous reassurance to Hitler”, the public was still disappointed that there would be no land offensive in the west.¹²¹

By the end of October 1941, such feeling was diminishing in some quarters following the publication of Lord Gort’s dispatches concerning the evacuation from France in May and June 1940.¹²² This, together with the withdrawals from Greece and Crete in April and May 1941, brought home how dangerous such an assault could be and how vulnerable it could leave the country. Nevertheless, some voices were still raised in favour of a second front but by January 1942 Churchill dispensed with discussion and instead placed the emphasis on the aid which was getting through to Russia. He explained that both Government and Parliament thought that the best aid Britain could give was “in supplies of many kinds of raw materials and of munitions, particularly tanks and aircraft”.¹²³ He assured the House that “the whole quantity was promised and sent” and later in the year great efforts were made to portray him aboard one of the ships escorting the aid to Russian convoys, identifying him closely with sympathy and concern for the Russian cause.

The summer of 1942 saw a succession of defeats in Russia, with the loss of Kharkov in May, followed by the loss of Sevastopol and the German advance into the Caucasus in August. This generated considerable anxiety amongst the British public and renewed demands for a second front, which were taken up by the newspapers, and in particular Beaverbrook’s *Daily Express*. In response to the threat to Russia, a *Daily Express* leader in early May called for Britain to “strike out to help Russia. Strike out violently, strike out even recklessly” and was echoed by a public demonstration in Trafalgar Square.¹²⁴ The *Daily Mail* also carried a cartoon indicating that it was Churchill alone who would make the decision when to open the front (Figure 41). It showed him studying maps and means of travel to Europe with his ‘children’ who were dressed in the uniforms of the three services who demanded to know when they would be taken on their outing there. That the decision when to launch the invasion was solely Churchill’s

¹²¹ “War Situation” speech, House of Commons, 30th September 1941, Churchill, *The Unrelenting Struggle*, pp. 258-266. HI Weekly Report, 29th September-6th October 1941, INF1/292.

¹²² It had originally been intended to release the dispatches in June, but after the defeats in Greece, Crete and Libya it was thought “almost insane” to publish them at that date. Minutes of Committee, 10th June 1941, Walter Monckton Papers, Bodleian library, MT7,

¹²³ “War Situation” speech, House of Commons, 29th January 1942, Churchill, *End of the Beginning*, pp. 11-41.

¹²⁴ *Daily Express* 3rd May 1942.

was reflected in a further cartoon the following year (Figure 42). Here it showed Churchill quashing the public demand for a “second front now” with a more judicious “second front at the right moment”. Sir Stafford Cripps joined in the call for a second front just as Stalin intensified his request by sending Molotov to negotiate for a second front with America and Britain and for the resumption of Allied aid convoys. Churchill, however, still refused to be drawn into making a commitment which could not be kept but judiciously welcomed the “militant, aggressive spirit of the British nation” in his broadcast in May.¹²⁵ The *Daily Express* reported the speech, misleadingly, as a promise on Churchill’s part to open the front in the near future, although he made no such assurance at all.¹²⁶ In this way, the popular press sustained the belligerent images of Churchill

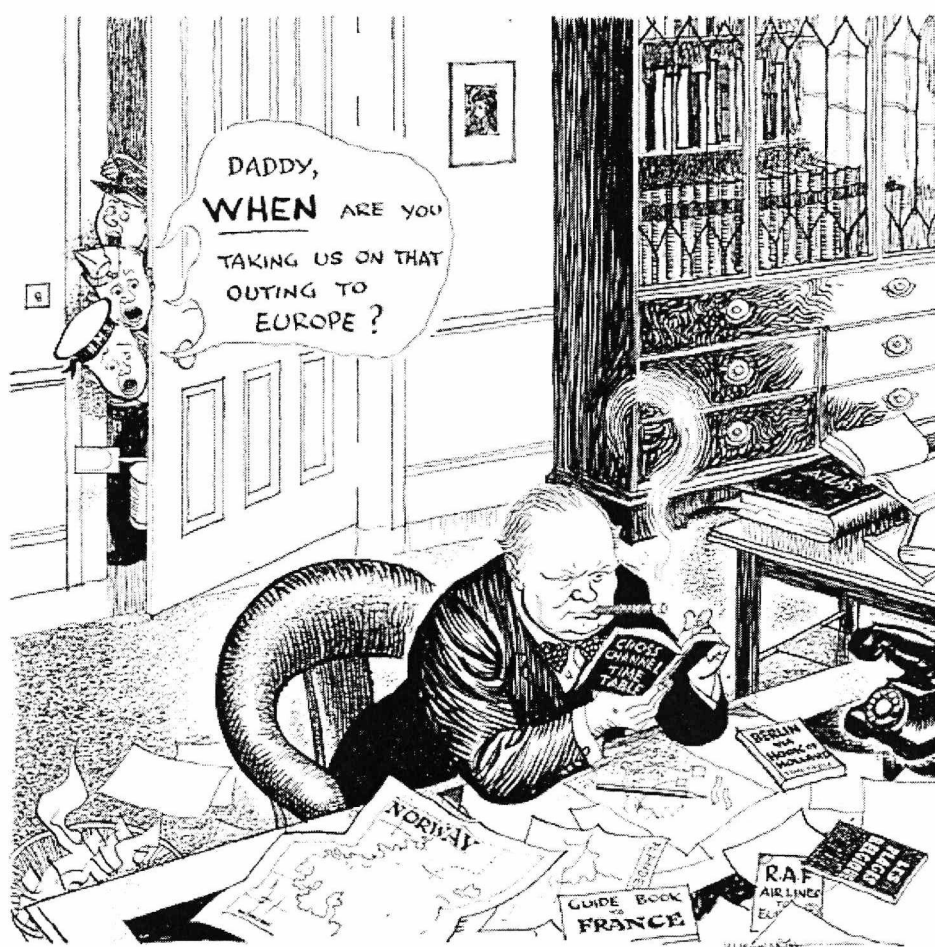


Figure 41 *Daily Mail* 29th July 1942

¹²⁵ “Prime Minister for Two Years” broadcast 10th May 1942, Churchill, *The End of the Beginning* pp. 100-107.

¹²⁶ *Daily Express* 11th May 1942.



Figure 42 *Evening Standard* 27th September 1943

leaving him vulnerable to attack should he fail to instigate an assault but Churchill could be seen to conduct his usual trick of satisfying the public whilst promising and revealing nothing.¹²⁷ As the summer of 1942 wore on, the ‘Second Front Now’ crusade continued apace with strenuous campaigning from the left demanding aid for Russia.¹²⁸ By August, however, HI found that it was only a minority of the public which supported the move and that “the more thoughtful [felt] that ‘the Government is as keen as anyone [to open a new front], and the decision must be left to them’ ”.¹²⁹ This revealed once again the faith in Churchill, for although they were willing to bow to Churchill’s decision, there was still a desire that the Prime Minister or another responsible Minister “should give assurance that a new front will opened at the earliest possible moment”.¹³⁰ Still, support for the front was gradually diminishing and the disastrous Dieppe raid in August solidified the feeling that the decision ought to be left to Churchill and his advisers, especially once the

¹²⁷ HI Weekly Report 4th-11th May 1942, INF1/292.

¹²⁸ Many booklets were produced in 1942 such as *Speed the Front* by Harry Pollitt, *Zero Hour. Second Front*, Labour Monthly War Pamphlet, and two booklets published by the Communist Party, *The Case for the Second Front* and *Mobilising the Party for the Second Front*.

¹²⁹ HI Weekly Report 28th July-4th August 1941, INF1/292.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

casualty figures were made known a month later.¹³¹ Even so, there was a lingering doubt that the failure to open a second front was because of anti-Russian feeling “in high places”.¹³²

Churchill's trip to Moscow in August 1942 to discuss the second front with Stalin, therefore, did much to allay fears of anti-Russian sentiment on his part. Although news of his trip did not come as a surprise to many, such a visit having been rumoured for some three weeks beforehand, it was met with “whole-hearted approval” and “the greatest satisfaction”, together with “a good deal of hopeful speculation”.¹³³ People hoped “the Prime Minister's personality will overcome Stalin's previous suspicions on account of his well-known anti-Communist attitude” and to prove Britain's determination to help.¹³⁴ Such a reaction demonstrated an uncharacteristic long-sightedness on the part of the public. Britain and Russia had been allies for over a year and Churchill had given unending public support for Russia and outlined on several occasions what form that support was taking, yet there remained a doubt about his commitment to help due to his previous anti-Communist stance. There was also some scepticism that the visit to Russia was simply a public relations exercise to alleviate criticisms or else to negotiate the Russian surrender; after all, so the reasoning went, Churchill had visited France immediately prior to its collapse in June 1940.¹³⁵ Happily such doubts about the Red Army's abilities proved false and instead the public's “hero worship of all things Russian” intensified and by January 1943 people were “beginning to run out of adjectives to express their admiration for the Russian offensive”.¹³⁶ Together with this adulation of Russia, there was also a sizeable proportion of the public which realised the difficulties of having the Soviet Union as an ally. Whilst the Russian entry into the war in June 1941 had been welcomed, there was still some apprehension about the “difficulties at any peace conference at which the British Empire and Russia may be allies”.¹³⁷ Churchill too, fully understood the implications and strove constantly to maintain good relations between the two countries.¹³⁸

¹³¹ HI Weekly Report 22nd-29th September 1942, INF1/292. The Dieppe raid on 20th August lost 4,000 men out of a total force of 6,000.

¹³² HI Weekly Report, 4th-11th August 1942, INF1/292.

¹³³ HI Weekly Report 17th-24th August 1942, INF1/292.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ HI Weekly Report 11th-17th August 1942, INF1/292.

¹³⁶ HI Weekly Reports 13th-20th October 1942 and 12-19th January 1943, INF1/292.

¹³⁷ HI Weekly Report 25th June-2nd July 1941, INF1/292.

¹³⁸ A great deal of work has been done on this subject but for a concise account see Martin Kitchen “Winston Churchill and the Soviet Union in the Second World War” in *Historical Journal* Vol. 30, No. 2, June 1987, pp. 415-436.

By August 1943, however, the relationship was becoming strained as the invasion of the continent was repeatedly postponed and, due to pressures from other fronts, aid was less readily forthcoming. The public noticed the tensions and believed that the Russians had “every right to complain” because of the failure to seize the opportunities to open the second front and because there was thought to be “little sympathy with Russia among ‘highly placed officials and influential people’ ”.¹³⁹ It was hoped that “Mr Churchill would throw some light on the situation in his next speech and make it really clear that we are really one with Russia in the present struggle” echoing earlier demands that he should show support.¹⁴⁰ Fears that he might be neglecting the Russians followed Churchill’s visit to Washington and Quebec in August where he met with Roosevelt and Mackenzie King, the Prime Minister of Canada. It was questioned why there was no Russian representative at the conference but the explanation was simple. As Churchill explained in his broadcast, “It would not have been suitable for Russia to be present at this Anglo-American conference which...was largely...concerned with the heating and inflaming of the war against Japan, with whom the Soviet Government have a five years’ treaty of non-aggression”.¹⁴¹ To address the public’s concern about the side-lining of Russia he did express his wish to hold a three-power conference at a later date to discuss “the various important questions connected with the future arrangements for world security”. The broadcast was yet another extraordinary success. It was “regarded by many as ‘one of his best’ and [was] particularly praised for being comprehensive, clear and straightforward, for removing many doubts, criticisms and symptoms of uneasiness, and for giving so much information”.¹⁴² Indeed, so comprehensive was it that it “left the disgruntled with no powder or shot”.¹⁴³ Even the remnant second front campaigners were satisfied that “the invasion from the West is planned and coming” and many regarded Churchill’s words as a definite promise.¹⁴⁴

And so Churchill fulfilled yet another role for the public: that of interpreter of diplomatic relations. People had failed to understand the multiplicity of interests that characterise diplomacy and had allowed old loyalties and sentimentalism to cloud their perception of the relationship between Britain and the USSR. It took Churchill’s

¹³⁹ HI Weekly Report 24th-31st August 1942, INF1/292.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ “The Call for a Three-power Talk” broadcast 31st August 1943, Churchill, *Onwards to Victory*, pp. 173-180.

¹⁴² HI Weekly Report 21st-28th September 1943, INF1/292.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

perceptive vision to clarify that view and it fell to him to communicate it to the public. Once more, the public was grateful for his presentation of facts and clear explanation.

If the British public's attitudes towards Russia can be characterised as one tantamount to hero worship, the attitude towards the other principal ally, America, was one of indifference. Although the public appreciated Roosevelt's efforts to help Britain, especially before America entered the war, there was little sympathy for the rest of the administration or the American people.¹⁴⁵ A month after the attack on Pearl Harbor, interviewers for the Wartime Social Survey's special report on America agreed that it was the most difficult report they had ever undertaken because "interest in the United States shown by the public was scant" and it was accompanied by widespread ignorance of basic facts about America.¹⁴⁶ The "malicious glee" that was initially felt after news of Pearl Harbor broke ultimately gave way to "great satisfaction" that America was "at last in with us", largely because of the vast industrial and military might it possessed.¹⁴⁷ Churchill courted this from the outset of the war and thought that Britain's only chance of survival, especially after the Fall of France, lay across the Atlantic.¹⁴⁸ At first, the relationship was somewhat lukewarm as Roosevelt was about to face an election and could not depart from the traditional isolationist stance, although Churchill and Roosevelt did negotiate the 'ships for bases' deal in August 1940.¹⁴⁹ The press gave the news widespread approval and the *Daily Express* paraphrased Churchill, that "like old man river, Britain and the US will just go rolling along" for it gave the first signs of hope that help might be forthcoming and presaged a closer relationship between the two countries.¹⁵⁰ In appreciation of his efforts, the first of the ships, as it was transferred to British ownership, was re-named *HMS Churchill*. Once Roosevelt had secured a further term in office aid was more readily available and the famous Lend-Lease Act was passed in March 1941 to a great fanfare in the press. But the public appeared unmoved by the

¹⁴⁵ "Public Attitudes to America" appendix to HI Weekly Report 22nd-29th December 1941, INF1/292.

¹⁴⁶ Wartime Social Survey Report on America, January 1942, INF1/293.

¹⁴⁷ "Public Attitudes to America" appendix to HI Weekly Report 22nd-29th December 1941, INF1/292.

¹⁴⁸ This has generated claimed that Churchill was responsible for the loss of the British Empire as this jarred with American demands that liberated countries should return to self-governance. Churchill's culpability on this account is taken up in John Charmley's *Churchill: End of Glory* (Hodder and Staughton, 1993). For more on the disparity of British and American policy see Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a Kind*, (Hamish Hamilton, 1978).

¹⁴⁹ This involved giving the American navy 99 year leases on British bases in the West Indies and Far East in return for 50 rather obsolete destroyers.

¹⁵⁰ *Daily Express* 21st August 1940. "Many and the Few" speech, House of Commons, 20th August, Churchill, *Into Battle*, pp. 252-262. See Appendix 2 for the text of Churchill's speech.

agreement and people were equally uninspired by the next momentous Anglo-American declaration, the Atlantic Charter.¹⁵¹

In the middle of August 1941, Churchill was suddenly found to be absent from the House of Commons when Attlee, as unofficial deputy Prime Minister, gave the usual war situation speech in the House of Commons. The *Daily Mirror* drew attention to this, noting that Attlee's delivery lacked Churchill's characteristic roar, comparing him, rather cruelly, with "the murmur of the woodpigeon stifled by the screams of an eagle; with the muted strings of a harp in comparison with a clarion's metallic blast".¹⁵² On the 14th August Attlee made a well-advertised broadcast and announced to Britain that Churchill was attending a meeting with Roosevelt on board a warship somewhere in the Atlantic.¹⁵³ From there he issued a joint declaration with Roosevelt outlining the common policies of Britain and America which promised, amongst other things, a peace that would ensure all people "may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want" once the Nazi regime had been overthrown.¹⁵⁴ The Atlantic Charter, as it came to be known, was the closest the Government had ever come to issuing a declaration of war aims and as such ought to have been an important piece of legislation for Anglo-American relations and for the British public.

The news hit the headlines in all the newspapers and all carried the same blurred photograph of Churchill and Roosevelt aboard ships, radioed back from North America using the very cutting edge of technology, indicating the urgency of the news.¹⁵⁵ Other photographs followed a few days later of Churchill looking back at Roosevelt's departing ship, of the hymn service held on board Roosevelt's ship, of Churchill stroking the ship's cat, and of him silhouetted against the convoy which they joined on the return journey.¹⁵⁶ A book was published of Churchill's voyage¹⁵⁷ and newsreel footage hit the cinemas promptly and was complemented with a MoI film for non-theatrical distribution in October 1942. Such a fanfare of publicity, however, did not impress the importance of

¹⁵¹ The absence of comment on the Lend-Lease Act in HI and MO reports suggests that the British public had little or no interest in it.

¹⁵² *Daily Mirror* 7th August 1941.

¹⁵³ The news was already known by British censorship and was published early in the American press since it had been leaked from German sources in Lisbon. Oliver Harvey, *The War Diaries of Oliver Harvey*, (edited by John Harvey, Collins, 1978) 5th August 1941, p. 27. Hereafter Harvey diary.

¹⁵⁴ The sixth of eight points of the Atlantic Charter, 14th August 1941 in Churchill, *The Unrelenting Struggle* pp. 224-5. See Appendix 2 for the text of the declaration.

¹⁵⁵ This photograph appeared in all the main newspapers on 16th August 1941.

¹⁵⁶ These photographs appeared on successive days but the uniformity of their inclusion reveals a well-organised propaganda campaign.

¹⁵⁷ *Atlantic Meeting* by H.V. Morton. Morton and H. Spring were specially selected by Brendan Bracken, the new Minister for Information, to accompany Churchill on his journey with the view to publicise it afterwards.

the meeting on Oliver Harvey, Private Secretary to Eden, who thought the declaration a “terribly woolly document full of all the old clichés of the League of Nations period”, a sentiment shared by George Strauss MP.¹⁵⁸ The public were, however, less discerning and showed great interest in the meeting, even if they failed to understand its implications.¹⁵⁹ A HI Special Report did find approval of the newsreels of the conference from 45 out of 56 correspondents, who were “as pleased as ever to see Mr. Churchill looking like Mr. Pickwick, pouring out very un-Pickwickian sentiments with regard to the Axis dictators”.¹⁶⁰ Only two correspondents expressed disapproval and this was on the grounds that they had heard the speeches “so many times on the wireless”. Of the nine inconclusive reports, people stated that they were “rather tired of seeing Churchill and Roosevelt on the screen” and that “the shots of the Prime Minister in his new hat and his new suit were rather childish”.¹⁶¹ But significantly, such coverage only reported Churchill’s activities rather than the conference itself.

Attlee addressed the import of the conference in his broadcast but it was thought to be “something of an anti-climax” as people thought that the outcome of the meeting would be an American declaration of war on Germany.¹⁶² By the time Churchill spoke on his return home people were more amenable to the idea that the Atlantic meeting had no such grave import. Even Churchill admitted that it had been primarily symbolic, denoting “the unities which stir and at decisive moments rule the English speaking peoples throughout the world”.¹⁶³ Equally, he skirted around the issue of war aims and the content of the Charter, calling it “a simple, rough and ready wartime statement of the goal towards which the British Commonwealth and the US mean to mark their way.” Such a lacklustre statement accompanied by such a fanfare of publicity had something of a mixed reception. While the speech was generally “well-received”, in some cases it was “regarded as chiefly for overseas consumption” and there was some criticism that “it told us nothing new”.¹⁶⁴ Amongst the “less thoughtful” there was such a failure to grasp any possible implication of the agreement that there was even some disdain and a suggestion made that “the Prime Minister’s broadcasts should be reserved for items of great

¹⁵⁸ Harvey diary, 12th August 1941, p. 31. Strauss’ article in *Tribune*, 12th September 1941.

¹⁵⁹ HI Weekly Report, 13th-20th August 1941.

¹⁶⁰ HI Special Report, *Film Correspondents’ Reports on Newsreels*, 23rd March 1942, INF1/293.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² HI Weekly Report 13th-20th August 1941, INF1/292.

¹⁶³ “The Meeting with President Roosevelt” broadcast speech, 24th August 1941, Churchill, *The Unrelenting Struggle*, pp. 229-237.

¹⁶⁴ HI Weekly Report 20th-27th August 1941, INF1/292.

importance”.¹⁶⁵ In the long term, such scepticism proved foresightful as the Atlantic Charter had little bearing upon any decision or policy subsequently made. As Charmley wrote, “it amounted to little more than a declaration from a conference of bishops that they were against sin”.¹⁶⁶ Even so, among the more thoughtful listeners, his speech and the Charter “greatly enhanced his reputation” and he embarked upon his career as an international statesman.¹⁶⁷

Churchill’s visit to Washington shortly after the American declaration of war on Japan marked a significant moving together of the two countries. His visit to Roosevelt was ostensibly to discuss Allied strategy of a two front war and to impress upon the Americans the necessity of crushing Germany first, after which the fall of Japan and Italy would follow. The visit itself was received with “the greatest satisfaction” by the British public and was found to be a counteracting measure to the “depression resulting from Japanese successes in the Far East”¹⁶⁸ but it was Churchill’s speeches in Congress and the Canadian Parliament which had the biggest influences on world opinion.¹⁶⁹ The first of these, at Congress on 26th December, dealt with the nature of the Anglo-American relationship and how, working together, Britain and America would prove victorious but not before, he warned, “a long and hard war”. Again, pursuing its demand for a second front the *Daily Express* interpreted his words “the year 1943 will enable us to assume the initiative upon an ample scale” to mean that “1943 will be the year of attack”.¹⁷⁰ The misrepresentation of his words, however, was not taken up by the public. Instead, people joined in with the general praise that was lavished upon him by Congress and the media. All of the newspapers emphasised the tumultuous applause Churchill received in Congress and a large proportion of the British public agreed that the speech was “a great historic utterance”, “the best he has ever made”.¹⁷¹ The *News Chronicle* pointed out that the format would be familiar to British audiences and there was indeed some gentle criticism from the public that it followed “more or less the usual formula”.¹⁷² However, the “force, the brilliance, the subtlety, with which it was presented, appear[ed] to be

¹⁶⁵ HI Weekly Report 27th August-1st September 1941, INF1/292.

¹⁶⁶ Charmley, *Churchill: End of Glory*, p. 460.

¹⁶⁷ HI Weekly Report 27th August-1st September 1941, INF1/292.

¹⁶⁸ HI Weekly Report 22nd-29th December 1941, INF1/292.

¹⁶⁹ “The Speech to Congress” 26th December 1941 and “Preparation – Liberation – Assault” speech to the Canadian Senate and House of Commons at Ottawa, 30th December 1941 in Churchill, *The Unrelenting Struggle*, pp. 333-340 and 341-349. See Appendix 2 for the text of the speeches.

¹⁷⁰ *Daily Express* 27th December 1941.

¹⁷¹ HI Weekly Report 22nd-29th December 1941, INF1/292.

¹⁷² *News Chronicle* 26th December 1941. HI Weekly Report 22nd-29th December 1941, INF1/292.

appreciated by everyone”.¹⁷³ In addition, the speech laid to rest the fears generated by his broadcast on 8th December that he had strained himself and had lost his command. As HI found, “Particular relief [was] expressed that the Prime Minister spoke with his old vigour and that ‘all signs of previous weariness and stumbling had gone’ ”.¹⁷⁴ His next speech at Ottawa four days later also met with relief that “Mr. Churchill had regained his old fire” and was a “tonic to confidence bruised by his halting utterance on the radio, following Japan’s entry into the war”.¹⁷⁵ His retort of “some chicken; some neck” to the French assertion in 1940 that “in three weeks England will have her neck wrung” may not have matched up to the fine Churchillian rhetoric of the summer of 1940, but unlike those grand phrases it immediately “seized the popular imagination”.¹⁷⁶

Fears about Churchill’s health and welfare had emerged immediately prior to the Atlantic Charter meeting in August 1941 when his unexplained absence in the House of Commons gave rise to rumours that he was very ill or even dead.¹⁷⁷ By the time of his broadcast of 8th December, there was greater anxiety that his health should be failing.¹⁷⁸ The lack of news about his whereabouts for twelve days following his momentous speeches in North America at the end of 1941 again gave rise to speculation that he had died in an air crash or that he was on a necessary recuperative holiday in the Bahamas.¹⁷⁹ There was, therefore, “immense relief” at his return on January 17th as it “allayed considerable public fear”.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the idea persisted that when there had been no news of him, he had been sick or had had an accident.¹⁸¹ A similar rumour abounded when again he was absent from the House of Commons prior to the Moscow conference of August 1942. On this occasion he was reported to be undergoing an operation, or else, incredibly, simply missing.¹⁸² By the time of a genuine illness following the Casablanca conference in January 1943, public opinion had become rather more sophisticated. No rumours accompanied his absence as many people suspected that the

¹⁷³ HI Weekly Report 22nd-29th December 1941, INF1/292.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ “Preparation – Liberation – Assault” speech to Canadian Senate and House of Commons, Ottawa, 30th December 1941, Churchill, *The Unrelenting Struggle*, pp. 341-349. HI Weekly Report, 29th December 1941 – 5th January 1942, INF1/292.

¹⁷⁶ HI Weekly Report, 29th December 1941 – 5th January 1942, INF1/292. HI Special Report, Film Correspondents’ Reports on Newsreels, 23rd March 1942, INF1/293.

¹⁷⁷ Other rumours were that Churchill was on the verge of resigning, that Hitler was dead and that Roosevelt had committed suicide. HI Weekly Report 13th-20th August 1941, INF1/292.

¹⁷⁸ HI Weekly Report 8th-15th December 1941, INF1/292.

¹⁷⁹ HI Weekly Report 12th-10th January 1942, INF1/292. Churchill had, in fact, had a heart attack, but no-one (including Churchill) other than Churchill’s doctor knew at the time. Lord Moran, *Churchill: The Struggle for Survival*, (Heron Books, 1966), 27th December 1941, pp. 16-17.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ HI Weekly Report 19th-25th January 1942, INF1/292.

¹⁸² HI Weekly Report 11th-17th August 1942, INF1/292.

special announcement which was to be made at 3 am “would concern the Prime Minister and President Roosevelt and were rather bored by all the fuss”.¹⁸³ When in the past Churchill’s courage in making his travels had been praised, this time it was taken for granted. Upon his return, there was still a feeling of “great relief” but in addition, HI also reported “confidence in Mr Churchill, faith in his judgement, reliance on his word and tremendous admiration for his leadership”.¹⁸⁴ When he subsequently fell ill with pneumonia there was “very real concern for him”.¹⁸⁵ It was felt that his illness was “connected with the strain of his travels” and out of a sense of sheer indebtedness people felt that “he has worn himself out on our behalf”.¹⁸⁶ This very real threat to Churchill’s health intensified the notion of his indispensability. People were reported to voice the sentiment that it would be “a calamity if anything happened to him” and, demonstrating that the whole war effort was viewed as resting upon his shoulders, that “he is irreplaceable – if he’s out of it, we’re done”.¹⁸⁷ The relief felt at his recovery was shared by Low as shown in his cartoon of 22nd February (Figure 43). This shows



Figure 43 *Evening Standard* 22nd February 1943

¹⁸³ HI Weekly Report 26th January-2nd February 1943, INF1/292.

¹⁸⁴ HI Weekly Report 9th-16th February 1943, INF1/292.

¹⁸⁵ HI Weekly Report 16th-23rd February 1942, INF1/292.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Churchill in bed (replete with cigar) being worried by Göbbels wielding a 'Bolshevik bogey'. Making light of Churchill's illness, the caption explains, "Mr. Churchill's indisposition is not serious. What was thought to be a germ proved to be only a German". This illness was remembered later in the year when he fell ill again with a more serious bout of pneumonia after the 'Big Three' conference at Teheran in December. The news of his indisposition came as a shock after Eden's statement that he had left Churchill in good health, causing "widespread anxiety and sympathy" among the public.¹⁸⁸ This time, people were more adamant that "he does too much and exposes himself to too many severe risks; now his mission to Mr. Stalin is complete, they suggest[ed] that any further conferences should be held in London".¹⁸⁹ His return from convalescence in Tunisia was met with "universal delight and relief" but it was hoped that he would take better care of himself in the future both by "refraining from any further journeys and by taking things easier".¹⁹⁰ Clearly, people did not appreciate the importance of diplomacy, although there was a profound acknowledgement of Churchill's personal achievements. HI found that "All classes, including even Communists, are stated to realise the great debt the country owes to Mr. Churchill" and it was felt that "there is no-one who could follow him on the same grand scale".¹⁹¹

His return to the House of Commons in January 1944 was, however, received with mixed feelings. Harold Nicolson wrote of how "a gasp of astonishment pass[ed] over the faces of the Labour party opposite" when Churchill entered the chamber. "Suddenly they jumped to their feet and started shouting, waving their papers in the air".¹⁹² Henry Channon viewed the scene somewhat more sanguinely. The House, he admitted, "cheered and rose, a spontaneous welcome which in dramatic circumstances was legitimate" but it was also "curiously cold".¹⁹³ He added, "Churchill is not loved in the House". This declining popularity amongst the politicians was reflected amongst the public throughout the rest of the year. People thought that "a man who was on his seventieth year and who had pneumonia twice in the past twelve months could not be as good as he was".¹⁹⁴ This contrasts with concerns about his age three years before when worries were expressed that he might strain himself; now he had shown his vulnerability

¹⁸⁸ HI Weekly Report 14th-21st December 1943, INF1/292.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ HI Weekly Report 18th-25th January 1944, INF1/292.

¹⁹¹ HI Weekly Report 14th-21st December 1943, INF1/292.

¹⁹² Nicolson diary, 18th January 1944, p. 344.

¹⁹³ Channon diary, 15th January 1944, p. 385.

¹⁹⁴ Robert Bruce-Lockhart, (edited by Kenneth Young) *Dairies of Bruce-Lockhart*, (Macmillan, 1980) 26th April 1944, p. 300.

in spite of his boundless energy and determination. He was becoming an old man in the eyes of the public. As such he was open to the same criticisms that had been levelled at Chamberlain on his downfall, that “Chamberlain’s much too old. Why, a working man has to retire at 65, the dirty old bugger”.¹⁹⁵

Interest in Churchill’s health proved to be an inverse ratio of the interest shown in the conferences themselves. The Atlantic Meeting of August 1941 generated most interest among the British public if only because of its novelty and perhaps because of the extensive publicity campaign which surrounded it. The Moscow conference of August 1942 also received “whole-hearted approval” because of the interest in Russia and Stalin.¹⁹⁶ But for the Washington, Casablanca, and Quebec conferences in June 1942, and January, May and August 1943 respectively, HI consistently recorded that there was “not much excitement” or that it was eclipsed by news from some other theatre of the war.¹⁹⁷ By the time of the Washington conference in May 1943 the public had become inured to Churchill’s travels. The meeting created “little surprise” because as soon as Attlee made an important speech in the House of Commons, “people [knew] Churchill [was] away”¹⁹⁸ and the Teheran meeting found “a certain impatience with ‘momentous conferences’ ” as people wanted deeds rather than words.¹⁹⁹ The only interest shown in the Teheran conference was that “the ‘Big 3’ have met at last”.²⁰⁰ There was little interest in the purport of any of the meetings, insofar as it could be disclosed at the time; the cult of personality generated whatever interest there was, the personality being, of course, Churchill.

The newspapers were instrumental in the development of this cult as the news about each of the conferences hinged upon the central figure of Churchill, be it through his speeches, especially at the Washington meeting of December 1941, the reception from the troops he visited, for example, Egypt in August 1942, or the illnesses which followed the Casablanca and Teheran conferences. Churchill’s own speeches and broadcasts upon his return from each of the meetings were also crucial in putting international affairs into perspective for the public and answering many of the questions

¹⁹⁵ MO FR 99, *The Norway Crisis*, April 1940.

¹⁹⁶ HI Weekly Report 25th August-1st September 1942, INF1/292.

¹⁹⁷ For example, there was “considerable interest” in Churchill’s second visit to Washington when first reported but declined after news of reverses in Libya (HI Weekly Report 16th-23rd June 1942); the meeting at Casablanca “did not arouse much interest” (HI Weekly Report 26th January-2nd February 1943). News of later conferences followed the same pattern.

¹⁹⁸ HI Weekly Report 11th-18th May 1943, INF1/292.

¹⁹⁹ HI Weekly Report 7th-14th December 1943, INF1/292.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

people had about them. There were few other such easy access, self-explanatory sources available.

Conclusion

Churchill's role as an international statesman was a vital part of his public image. Not only did he serve as interpreter of diplomacy, he also proved to be the bulwark against the public's obsession with the Soviet Union and the perceived reluctance of the Government to send aid, as well as being the buffer against the second front campaigners. In addition, his career as an international statesman contributed to the over-arching factors of providing realistic hope and facts which Churchill announced personally. This in turn, together with Churchill's affable character, helped to generate the personality cult since only Churchill could fulfil all of these roles. Public dependence upon him was a natural consequence and, ultimately, the realisation of his indispensability dawned upon the public. Concerns for his health and safety were demonstrations of this appreciation of Churchill and were intensified by the feelings of debt the country owed to him on account of his leadership in 1940. There was, therefore, a reciprocal relationship in Churchill's role as world statesman: he drew public attention to international affairs which would not have otherwise followed whilst dispelling some of the criticisms of the Government. At the same time, he benefitted from the singular attention he received, making him the personification of efforts to win the war and, indeed, of the war itself.

Churchill's military image was closely tied with his diplomatic pursuits especially as the war went on but it also grew from other factors. As was seen in Chapter 1, Churchill's role as the First Lord of the Admiralty fostered a keen image as the man of action. Disappointments arose in the summer of 1940 when it became clear that Britain was simply not in a position to launch an offensive which might bring about a quicker end to the war, but this was blamed on the lack of preparation undertaken by previous Governments. By the beginning of 1942, however, the habit of tracing failures to earlier Governments was "wearing thin" and could no longer protect the Government nor, indeed, Churchill.²⁰¹ This, in part, was the reason for a loss in Churchill's prestige and indicated the way for the blurring of the previously held distinction between him and his

²⁰¹ HI Weekly Report 9th-16th February 1942, INF1/292.

Government. But more pressing was the frustration caused by the simple lack of military victories themselves.

The sympathy with the Russians and the desire to pursue the war vigorously in order to promote a speedy end culminated in the demand for the second front from late 1941. In view of this, Operation Crusader in November 1941 was vital to the British public's morale, but the succession of military defeats in early 1942 brought disillusionment and frustrations ran high as time and again the British were "incapable of conclusive victory against anyone except the Italians".²⁰² Naturally, such frustration was vented upon the character who, by way of Legend if not word, had promised so much and the correlation between Churchill's standing and the public's morale is indicated in Figures 39 and 40. In 1940, people had expected Churchill to bring a swift and conclusive victory but the events of early 1942 finally proved unequivocally that it would be a long war and therewith their own perception of Churchill was undermined. At the same time, people relied on Churchill's skills in prophesying the outcome of different campaigns, even to the point of inventing statements, so that when they failed to be fulfilled people were doubly disappointed. This reinvention of Churchill coupled with social sanction provided by criticisms in the press and the House of Commons meant that the public could, for the first time in the war, express doubts and pent-up criticisms of Churchill. The release this afforded was vital to morale but also meant that negative feelings could be freely expressed for the coming months. When once again Churchill worked his oratorical magic in his broadcast of 10th May 1942, criticism disappeared only to be replaced by high praise and devotion. The turn of events meant that this was short-lived as the Fall of Tobruk at the end of June allowed resentment to resurface. This time, however, criticism was tempered by a realisation of his indispensability, brought on by his relationship with Roosevelt and partly because by mid-1942 the Churchill Legend was firmly established and unassailable. Although developing before this date, the deification process was completed sometime between the Fall of Singapore and Tobruk. After this date any criticism was moderated by a palimpsest of respect, admiration and gratitude for his leadership through the dark days of 1940.

A vital part of this untouchable image was, of course, his speeches. By mid-1942 the famous Churchillian phrases had become common parlance and people expected similarly historic utterances in every broadcast. Thus, when he departed from the spectacular, as in his statement regarding war with Japan on 8th December 1941, the

²⁰² HI Weekly Report 9th-16th February 1942, INF1/292.

public took exception and spirits were noticeably affected. When, however, he was uncharacteristically optimistic, as in his broadcast of 10th May 1942, public exuberance knew no bounds. This showed a dangerous reliance on his every word and was exemplified over Tobruk when the public invented Churchill's speeches and statements for themselves. People had come to expect Churchill to be a 'good news genie', (without, to give him his due, any encouragement from Churchill) thus when a military campaign did not go according to plan the backlash was all the fiercer and disappointments were felt all the more keenly.

This was undoubtedly facilitated by the press. The more popular newspapers, and especially the sensationalist *Daily Mirror*, sought to find scapegoats for the setbacks and difficulties experienced.²⁰³ Red tape, 'Colonel Blimps' and minor officials were all blamed at various points throughout the war so it is little wonder that criticisms should be levelled, on occasion, at Churchill. The exception to this was the *Daily Express*. This newspaper supported Churchill in all circumstances and was instrumental in distinguishing between him and his Government. The *Mirror*, by contrast, was driven by a sense of self-righteous indignation which was perhaps occasionally misplaced but it felt free to criticise whatsoever and whomsoever it wished.²⁰⁴ Whilst this is not the place to discuss the merits of particular journalistic styles, it is worthwhile pointing out the hold that the *Daily Mirror* had upon public opinion. Although coming second to the *Express* in terms of circulation figures, the correlation between its editorials and public opinion as defined by HI is striking. As mentioned above, only the *Mirror* covered Churchill's statement of 2nd June 1942 concerning the outlook in North Africa and stressed its optimistic tone and some two weeks later the public blamed Churchill's optimism for their disappointment. Equally, the *Mirror* gave most coverage to Cripps' accusations of Churchill's dictatorial tendencies in late June 1942 and a few days later similar criticisms emerged in the HI reports. What may have contributed to this phenomenon is the nature of the *Mirror's* readership, later identified by the editor as being mainly the working-class, housewives, factory workers and soldiers, which was more homogenous than that of other newspapers.²⁰⁵ This meant that opinions put forward by the *Mirror* would have been reinforced to a greater degree within the work place and among social peers. Whilst not claiming that the *Mirror*, nor only the *Mirror*, had a direct influence on

²⁰³ As Zec, the *Mirror's* cartoonist during the war, later recalled, the *Mirror* was "all about sex, sensation, pets, heroism". Zec quoted in Matthew Engel, *Tickle the Public*, (Indigo, 1996) p. 165.

²⁰⁴ For a sense of the tenor of the *Daily Mirror* see Hugh Cudlipp, *Publish and Be Damned!* (Andrew Dakars, 1953).

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.* p. 136.

public opinion at this time, it does show how suggestible the public could be but since not all opinions voiced by the newspapers were adopted by the public, it supports MO's notion that newspapers were influential by providing the topics to be discussed rather than bestowing the opinions themselves.²⁰⁶

In addition to revealing some of the influence of the newspapers, the MO and HI reports call into the question the significance of the opinion polls which have shaped so much historical understanding of public opinion in this period. These would suggest that while the public's opinion of Churchill in July 1942 was significantly disturbed, other positive factors, such as his indispensability, maintained his position with the public. By contrast, criticism in February and March 1942 ran deeper, partly because it was the first time sanction had been given to criticism of Churchill (on this occasion in the press and in Parliament), and partly because of the combined effect on public morale of the German advances in Libya, the Japanese successes in the Far East and the incident with the German battleships in the Channel. Balfour's claim that the "record low" occurred in July 1942 is, therefore misplaced. Equally open to question is David Reynold's claim that 1940 saw "the pinnacle of [Churchill's] reputation".²⁰⁷ Certainly, the 88 per cent Churchill achieved in approval rating in 1940 was high, but it was higher on several other occasions and was also accompanied by far more unequivocally positive comment. Rather than the peak occurring in 1940, it came in mid-1943 when the Churchill Legend, a successful military campaign, and, as shall be seen in Chapter 5, a promising plan for reconstruction, all combined to make Churchill's position unassailable.

The effect of the military situation on Churchill's popularity cannot be gainsaid. The influence on both the increases and decreases is evident in the findings of HI, MO and BIPO, but HI also reveals the paradoxical nature of public opinion. For example, whilst the working classes were still troubled by Churchill's seemingly disingenuous treatment of Russia over the Moore-Brabazon episode, there was still substantial support for him. Equally, while there was more criticism of him revealed in the BIPO poll following the fall of Tobruk, there was a widespread loyalty amongst the public, based upon a sense of his indispensability. This notion of indispensability intensified as victory grew closer and it showed how Churchill came to be viewed as personally responsible for the military and diplomatic aspects of the war. Nevertheless, as the war continued there

²⁰⁶ MO FR 126 *Report on the Press*, May 1940.

²⁰⁷ David Reynolds, "Churchill in 1940: the Worst and Finest Hour" p. 254 in Blake and Louis, *Churchill*, pp. 241-256.

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²⁰⁶ Mass-Observation File Report 126 *Report on the Press*, May 1940.

²⁰⁷ David Reynolds, "Churchill in 1940: the Worst and Finest Hour" p. 254 in Blake and Louis, *Churchill*, pp. 241-256.

Chapter 5

Home Politics

Introduction

The traditional view of Churchill's role during the Second World War has tended to focus on his commitment to the military campaign and to diplomatic relations. Whilst this is not a wholly inaccurate assessment of his principal interests, it does run the risk of negating his contribution to home affairs.¹ As Prime Minister, he was answerable to the House of Commons and was required to participate in the discussions over legislation regarding the Home Front and reconstruction.² He also had a duty to his party while serving as leader and equally had to be seen by the British public to be discharging his duties. This chapter asks if Churchill fulfilled these duties as the leader of the Home Front and also examines the general trend of his popularity with emphasis on the period 1943 to the end of the war. It argues that this former question was the central issue in the General Election of 1945 which sheds further light on the debate surrounding the outcome. Historical accounts of the General Election have tended to concentrate on the reasons for the Labour victory or the Conservatives' defeat.³ These centre on whether or not the country swung to the left with a political consensus⁴ or if there was simply a characteristic swing of the pendulum away from the Conservatives towards non-party radicalism, although not necessarily towards Labour.⁵ An additional dimension is added

¹ Roy Jenkins, for example, devotes almost a third of his recent biography of Churchill to the war years, yet concentrates on the military and diplomatic aspects. Roy Jenkins, *Churchill* (Pan Books, 2002).

² Paul Addison in *Churchill on the Home Front* (Pimlico, 1993) addresses these issues from a Churchillian perspective throughout his political career. However, the relative brevity of the chapters on the years 1939-45 indicates how home affairs took a subsidiary role.

³ R.B. McCallum and Alison Readman, *The British General Election of 1945*, (Frank Cass, 1964, reprint from the 1947 edition) is an early account of the election but perhaps the most thorough, taking into consideration of the influence of the press and the public's attitudes to the election campaigns of the main political parties.

⁴ For example Henry Pelling "The 1945 General Election Reconsidered" in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 2, June 1980, pp. 399-414 and Paul Addison, *The Road to 1945*, (Cape, 1975) but see also Addison's postscript to the 1994 Pimlico edition. Stephen Brooke, however, argues against the notion of consensus in *Labour's War* (Oxford University Press, 1995) claiming instead that the war was characterised by political discord.

⁵ Steven Fielding, "The Second World War and Popular Radicalism: The Significance of the 'Movement Away From Party'" in *History*, Vol. 80, 1995, pp. 38-58.

with what James Hinton calls the Apathy School.⁶ Adherents of this view advocate that the public were uninterested in the election and the issues surrounding it and that they had to be “dragged yawning into the polling booths” in 1945.⁷

This chapter argues that the public were far from apathetic but equally did not welcome party politics. The Beveridge Report, published in 1942, instead politicised the public to a degree hitherto unseen in the war⁸ but such politicisation was tempered by a cynicism that the ‘powers that be’, notably politicians and big business, would do their utmost to thwart change and revert to the *status quo ante bellum*.⁹ Churchill was central to this scepticism as he persistently blocked legislation that would implement social reforms before the war was won. Attitudes to the post-war therefore affected people’s opinions of Churchill and *vice versa*. In addition, the chapter sheds light on why the Conservatives still gained a third of the vote in 1945, a factor which is often overlooked in other psephological accounts. It does not, however, aim to be an exhaustive explanation of people’s voting intentions in the election, merely to add a further element to the debate.

Party Politics

In contrast to the benign and benevolent Mr. Pickwick image which developed within the Myth and which characterised Churchill’s role on the Home Front, his role in party politics held every possibility of alienating large sections of society. His long career in parliament, often at Cabinet level, had created a legacy of decisions which had antagonised certain groups especially the working-classes and the left. Some of these had achieved mythical status, such as the apocryphal story of how he had ordered troops to fire on striking miners in 1910, whereas others, for example how the return to the gold standard in 1926 had upset workers’ wages, were more grounded in fact.¹⁰ The war, however, created different political conditions and the emergency, especially of 1940, saw

⁶ James Hinton “1945 and the Apathy School” in *History Workshop Journal*, Vol. 43, No. 1, Spring 1997, pp. 266-273. This article is a review of Steven Fielding, Peter Thompson, and Nick Tiratsoo, *England Arise!*, (Manchester University Press, 1995).

⁷ Stephen Fielding, “Popular Political Attitudes in Britain 1945-1951” p. 114 in Nick Tiratsoo (ed.), *The Attlee Years* (Pinter, 1991), pp. 106-125.

⁸ See T. Lindsay and Michael Harrington, *The Conservative Party 1918-1970* (Macmillan, 1970).

⁹ Sonya O. Rose argues for this in *Which People’s War?* (Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹⁰ Paul Addison gives a list of twelve reasons why Labour opinion was wary of Churchill before he came to power. Addison, “Journey to the Centre: Churchill and Labour in Coalition, 1940-1945” in Alan Sked and Chris Cook, (eds.) *Crisis and Controversy* (Macmillan, 1976) pp. 165-193.

party politics temporarily set aside. The electoral truce largely removed the opportunity and necessity for constant partisan canvassing of public opinion while the coalition Government demonstrated a greater degree of co-operation between the parties than had hitherto been known in British politics. But Churchill's position as Prime Minister and, from October 1940, as Conservative Party leader meant that he was still vulnerable to the sanction of parliament and of his fellow politicians.

Although united under Churchill in a coalition Government, acceptance of him as Prime Minister varied between party and political complexion. On the whole in May 1940, Labour welcomed Churchill whilst the Conservatives were more wary.¹¹ The majority of his own party mistrusted him on account of his maverick record during his Parliamentary career and his having crossed the floor twice hardly endeared him to party loyalists. Indeed, some thought that he had only partially returned to the Conservative fold.¹² But it had been Churchill's opposition to Chamberlain's policy of appeasement that generated most suspicion amongst the Tory faithful. His fraternisation with public figures from all political shades within the Anti-Nazi Council and his apparent willingness to remain in virtual isolation against the official policy of the party merely served to confirm his political untrustworthiness.¹³ Even the few who shared Churchill's opposition to Chamberlain in the late 1930s did not look to Churchill as their leader but to Eden.¹⁴ Indeed, Churchill's faithful followers at this time numbered just Brendan Bracken and Duncan Sandys. Once war had broken out, hindsight vindicated Churchill's stance and there was a gradual swing of favour against Chamberlain towards Churchill.

Chamberlain's inadequacy as a wartime Prime Minister was realised early in the war for he lacked the urgency and dash to inspire those around him. By contrast, Churchill was "the only Cabinet Minister who [could] put things across in an interesting way".¹⁵ His first statement to the House of Commons on the Navy's successes, for example, had a tremendous effect:

His delivery was really amazing and he sounded every note from deep pre-occupation to flippancy, from resolution to sheer boyishness.

¹¹ For more on the Conservatives' opposition to Churchill in 1940 see Andrew Roberts, *Eminent Churchillians*, (Phoenix, 1994) pp. 137-210.

¹² R.A. Butler thought that Churchill's politics were "a mixture of old Liberal doctrines of cheap food and free trade, combined with the Tory Democracy of his father". Quoted in John Ramsden, *The Age of Churchill and Eden*, (Longman, 1995) p. 18.

¹³ See Chapter 1.

¹⁴ Following Eden's entry to the Cabinet on the outbreak of war, this backbench group, numbering some twenty MPs, turned to Amery instead for leadership. See Chapter 1: 1940.

¹⁵ Thomas Jones quoted in Graham Stewart, *Burying Caesar*, (Phoenix, 1999), p. 393.

One could feel the spirits of the House rising with every word...In those twenty minutes Churchill brought himself nearer to the post of Prime Minister than he had ever been before. In the Lobbies afterward even Chamberlainites were saying 'We have now found our leader.'¹⁶

The declining popularity of Chamberlain was especially evident by the time of the Norway debate in May 1940. Where before the Government had secured a majority of around 240, by May 1940 this had fallen to just 81. But this did not signify Chamberlain's utter fall from grace, for in addition to the persistent pro-Chamberlainites, there were also some 60 Conservative MPs who abstained and 65 who had been absent.¹⁷ Such a strong basis for potential opposition seriously compromised Churchill's standing in the House and his claim to the premiership was still "undermined by the Conservative caucus".¹⁸ Despite the outcome of the vote, Chamberlain still commanded the affection of the party loyalists and when Churchill entered the House of Commons for the first time as Prime Minister he was "greeted with some cheers, but when a moment later Neville entered with his usual shy retiring manner, MPs lost their heads, they shouted, they waved their Order Papers, and his reception was a regular ovation."¹⁹ The smattering of applause for Churchill from the Conservative backbenches continued for some time until Paul Einzig pointed out to Chamberlain that this did not portray an image of unity to the rest of the world. So when Churchill was about to receive his usual lukewarm reception three days later, Margesson intervened and forced the Conservative backbenchers to cheer fervently.²⁰

On account of this ill-ease, Churchill's first choice of Cabinet was very much dictated by circumstance.²¹ Chamberlain was retained in the War Cabinet as Lord President of the Council presiding over home issues and Halifax was kept on as Foreign Secretary. Other Munichers were treated with similar respect and all, save Samuel

¹⁶ Nicolson Diary 26th September 1939, p. 37. Chips Channon, usually unmoved by Churchill's speeches, was similarly impressed. Robert Rhodes James (ed.) *Chips: the Diaries of Sir Henry Channon*, (Wiedenfield and Nicholson, 1967) 26th September 1939, p. 222. (Hereafter Channon diary).

¹⁷ At the Division on the second day of the Norway debate, 41 MPs who usually voted with the Government voted against it (33 Conservatives, 4 Liberal, 2 National Labour and 2 Independent) and 65 Conservatives and eight Labour members were absent unpaired. A.J.P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945*, (Penguin, 1979) pp. 472-473.

¹⁸ Harold Nicolson, (edited by Nigel Nicolson), *Diaries and Letters*, (Collins, 1967), 4th May 1940, p. 75. Hereafter Nicolson diary.

¹⁹ Channon diary 13th May 1940, p. 252.

²⁰ Paul Einzig, *In the Centre of Things* (Hutchinson, 1960) pp. 208-19.

²¹ For a full list of the appointments made in the first Churchillian Cabinet, see Winston Churchill, *The Second World War: Volume II, Their Finest Hour* (Cassell, 1949) pp. 13-14.

Hoare, were retained or else processed to the House of Lords.²² Other party rebels, such as Leo Amery and Duff Cooper, were given posts in the Government, but these were of lesser stature and proved that Churchill's appointments were not dictated by the settling of old scores. The Left secured only two seats in the War Cabinet (Attlee and Greenwood in non-departmental posts) while the Liberals were represented by Archibald Sinclair as Secretary of State for Air and Ernest Brown (the leader of the National Liberals) as Secretary of State for Scotland. The seemingly unbalanced constitution of the Government, which heavily favoured the Conservatives, was at first well received by the Press, the *Daily Express* commenting that "the Prime Minister has a good eye for picking Cabinet members" and it also revealed Churchill's recognition of the precariousness of his position.²³

As opinion turned against the Municheers through the summer of 1940 there was some rising doubt amongst the public as to Churchill's motives for keeping appeasers in prominent positions. Clearly, there was a failure to understand political motivations and people could only appreciate retributive demotion. The deaths of Chamberlain and Lord Lothian in November and December 1940, however, provided Churchill with the opportunity at once to satisfy the public's demands and strengthen his political hand. With their deaths two potential challengers were removed from his immediate environment, around whom malcontents might have flocked. By the end of 1940, Churchill's position was much stronger in the House than it had been earlier in the year as he had proved he was a suitably able Prime Minister who would not jeopardise the fate of the country with rash acts. He was therefore able to remove Halifax from the political arena by sending him to Washington as British ambassador to replace Lothian and Chamberlain was, quite simply, gone.

Chamberlain's onset of terminal illness had demanded his resignation in October 1940 just weeks before he died, over which few members of the public expressed regret.²⁴ Several days before his resignation five times as many people were in favour of his leaving the Cabinet as were in favour of him staying which was the culmination of the rising tide of anti-Chamberlainism.²⁵ The Cabinet changes which ensued resulted in "some increase in party consciousness" as the left was further empowered with Bevin's

²² Hoare was sent to Spain as Ambassador and thereby withdrew from British politics. John Simon moved to the House of Lords and became Lord Chancellor.

²³ *Daily Express* 14th May 1940.

²⁴ Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 30th September - 9th October 1940, INF1/292. See Chapter 2 for more on the movement against Chamberlain in the summer of 1940.

²⁵ Mass-Observation File Report (hereafter MO FR) 438, *Article for World Review*, October 1940.

admission to the War Cabinet.²⁶ But the question of who would take up the leadership of the Conservative Party also generated some interest, particularly if it were to be Churchill.

The party leadership had been offered to him as he became Prime Minister in May so that he may have greater command in the House, but Churchill had refused it. “I am”, he explained to Chamberlain, “of course a Conservative. But as Prime Minister of a National Government, formed on the widest possible basis, and comprising the three parties, I feel that it would be better for me not to undertake the leadership of any one political party”.²⁷ This same concern about fairness and restraint caused by party affiliation was also shared by certain sections of the public. People in a South Yorkshire coalfield, for example, were reported to have expressed this concern a few months earlier and would presumably have been perturbed when he did finally accept the leadership.²⁸ Churchill’s wife, Clementine, had warned him that being leader might alienate much of the working-class support and that he would lose his standing as the ‘voice of the nation’.²⁹ The warning proved prophetic for HI noted in November 1940 a “distinct and growing uneasiness amid all the admiration shown for him” while MO found a similar hiatus in his growing popularity.³⁰ On average, one in ten thought that his becoming leader was a ‘bad thing’, although this figure rose to one in five amongst men and in Labour areas.³¹ MO also found that opinion against his leadership was much more forceful than “the vague pros” and took the line that it would compromise his independence.³²

Politically, it was an expedient move for him to accept the leadership. His earlier reticence in May revealed not only his concern for propriety and fairness but also a realisation that his leadership would, in all likelihood at that time, have been unacceptable to the majority of the party. But by October this situation had changed and Churchill became a much more acceptable candidate for the leadership. Other potential contenders had been hustled away leaving Churchill as the only serious candidate who

²⁶ HI Weekly Report, 30th September – 9th October 1940, INF1/292.

²⁷ Churchill to Chamberlain, 16th May 1940, CHAR2/402.

²⁸ HI Daily Report, 25th July 1940, INF1/264.

²⁹ Clementine Churchill quoted in Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front*, p. 359.

³⁰ HI Daily Report 14th-21st November 1940, INF1/292 and MO File Report 496 *Popular Attitudes to Wartime Politics* 20th November 1940.

³¹ MO FR 496 *Popular Attitudes to Wartime Politics* 20th November 1940. Table 15.

³² MO FR 511 *Political Awareness in Wartime*, 1st December 1940. The strength of feeling ought to be taken into account here, for although the majority, 60 per cent, declared that they were in favour of his leadership of the Conservative Party, MO’s comment suggests that such people might not have considered the proposal very thoroughly and might, had the subject been more thoroughly explained, have reversed their opinion.

had sufficient seniority and experience. In a reversal of earlier opinion, the “bulk of the party was anxious that he should become the Leader” now that the country was truly at war.³³ Churchill, however, “was still suspicious of them and of their attitude to him before the war”.³⁴

The scant collection of correspondence between Churchill and members of the Conservative hierarchy in the Conservative Party and Churchill archives testifies to the redundancy of people’s fears for Churchill’s loss of independence as well as Churchill’s own lack of interest in party politics. In spite of his assurance to Chamberlain that he was a Conservative, his greatest concern was with the winning of the war rather than with the winning of a General Election to be held at some unspecified date. In his four and a half year wartime tenure as leader, he had little contact with the successive party chairmen. Upon Douglas Hacking’s resignation, both he and the incoming chairman, Thomas Dugdale, “agreed that Winston is a difficult leader, and is not a Conservative at all, or even, perhaps by normal standards, a statesman”.³⁵ His choice in Ministers, once Churchill’s position was more secure and the Municheers had been despatched, seemed to confirm this view. The ‘acceptable’ party loyalist Halifax was replaced with the renegade Anthony Eden as Foreign Secretary, while the Left gradually gained a stronger foothold throughout the war. As Churchill later claimed, his Government had one of the broadest ranging constitutions in history.³⁶ But it was his reliance on the triumvirate of the politically maverick Beaverbrook, Bracken and (non-political) Professor Lindemann which caused the greatest malcontent amongst MPs for it was to these three that Churchill was said to listen. On account of this, accusations gradually began to fly around Westminster that Churchill’s stubbornness induced him to surround himself with ‘yes men’ in order that he might win every argument and dictate his own war policy.³⁷ Had his policy been more successful he might have escaped calumny, but as it was, 1940 offered no evidence of foreseeable victory and 1941 compounded this with the withdrawals from Greece and Crete in April and May.

As with other operations, expectations had been high following the optimistic reports in the press and Churchill’s statements in the House of Commons.³⁸ Although

³³ G.S. Harvie-Watt, *Most of My Life*, (Springwood, 1980) pp. 38-39.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

³⁵ Collin Brooks Diary, 12th March 1942 quoted in Addison “Journey to the Centre” p. 180.

³⁶ See John Charmley, *Churchill: The End of Glory* (Hodder and Staughton, 1993) p. 399 for more details on the breadth of his Government.

³⁷ Churchill’s inapproachability is explored in Ramsden, *The Age of Churchill and Eden*, p. 19.

³⁸ For example, see Churchill’s speech on 20th May 1941, *Parliamentary Debates (Commons)* (hereafter *Hansard*) vol. 371, col. 1403.

neither denied that the fighting was fierce, neither did they indicate that the battle was going badly and might be lost. The withdrawal from Greece initially created “despondency and suspense” and some criticism was levelled at the Government; “even Mr. Churchill [was] not free from blame”.³⁹ The debate on 7th May which followed the retreat, one year to the day after the debate which caused Chamberlain’s downfall, was treated as a motion of confidence. Lloyd George was especially harsh in his criticisms both of the fact that the issue was forced into a vote of confidence and of the record of the Government.⁴⁰ His comments clearly unnerved Churchill who interjected on several occasions during his speech, but the press largely thought that “there was much that was realistic and constructive” in Lloyd George’s speech.⁴¹ Churchill’s reply was less favourably received for it did little to answer critics or furnish any answers to questions that were posed during the debate. In speaking to their constituents, according to the *New Statesman*, MPs found that “the public, like most Members, admired the Prime Minister’s speech as a great oratorical effort, [but] they were quick to note his failure to answer a single criticism”.⁴² A few days later Hore-Belisha noted the same disillusionment: “The country would soon wake up and realise that speeches were not victories, he said, and that we were drugged with Winston’s oratory”.⁴³ Despite these misgivings the Government (and Churchill) won the debate with 447 votes to 3 against.

Three weeks later and the process was to repeat itself in kind with the withdrawal from Crete. Although once again the news media spoke of the fierceness of the fighting, reports contained a familiarly optimistic tone. Headlines such as “British hunt paratroops all day in Crete”⁴⁴, “Marines clear Crete base”⁴⁵ and “our men charge Crete Huns from town”⁴⁶ gave a definite impression that the battle would come out in the Allies’ favour. But the public, who were still reeling over the recent misleading reports from Greece, were not to be similarly deceived over Crete. Despite the press reports, there were suspicions that “Crete is known to be doomed” when the King of Greece fled the island at the end of May.⁴⁷ Such was the level of anticipation that when the news broke of the fall of the island there was little surprise amongst the public although they

³⁹ HI Weekly Report, 30th April - 7th May 1941, INF1/292.

⁴⁰ Lloyd George, 7th May 1941, in *Hansard*, vol. 371, cols. 807-881.

⁴¹ *New Statesman and Nation*, 10th May 1941, p. 475.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Channon diary, 12th May 1941, p. 304.

⁴⁴ *Daily Herald*, 21st May 1941.

⁴⁵ *Daily Express*, 29th May 1941.

⁴⁶ *Daily Mirror*, 24th May 1941.

⁴⁷ HI Weekly Report, 21st - 28th May 1941, INF1/292.

were said to be “considerably disturbed by it”.⁴⁸ Blame was once again placed on the Government, which was felt to be “not as strong as it should be, nor as resolute, and that apart from Mr. Churchill’s speeches, little was being done by the Government to encourage the belief that leadership [was] as resolute as the nation itself”.⁴⁹ This distinction between the Government and Churchill however, began to be eroded by the Crete incident and seeds of doubt were planted. “Whilst belief and trust in Mr. Churchill as a man and leader remain high”, found HI, “this week there has been more adverse comment on his choice of advisers than at any other time since he became Prime Minister”.⁵⁰ The public clearly did not blame Churchill personally for the retreat but the same could not be said of political and press opinion. “His credit”, remarked Barrington-Ward the editor of *The Times*, “had been impaired” and “considerable uneasiness” was caused by the retreat.⁵¹ Channon confirmed, “on all sides one hears increasing criticism of Churchill. He is undergoing a considerable slump in popularity and many of his enemies, long silenced by his personal popularity are once more vocal. Crete has been a great blow to him”.⁵² There was emerging criticism too amongst those who worked closely with him regarding his dictatorial tendencies. His reply to Lloyd George during the Greece debate, that his criticism of the Government was defeatist and served no useful function, only reinforced this.⁵³ MO found there was a similar realisation amongst the public, although still among a considerably small circle that “the P.M. keeps things too much in his own hands”.⁵⁴ HI failed to detect this particular minority opinion but did sense extensive criticism of Churchill in his treatment of Hore-Belisha – the first sustained and personal criticism of his premiership.⁵⁵

Hore-Belisha’s statement that Churchill’s speeches had drugged the country was only one of many criticisms he levelled at the Government and Churchill during the first half of 1941 and during the Crete debate he questioned the logistics and supply of equipment to forces in the Eastern Mediterranean.⁵⁶ Churchill, however, rounded on Hore-Belisha, maintaining that he was one of the last people in the country entitled to criticise the condition of the Army, having been Secretary of State for War during the most crucial point in the equipping of the armed forces.

⁴⁸ HI Weekly Report, 4th-11th June 1941, and 11th-18th June 1941, INF1/292

⁴⁹ HI Weekly Report, 21st-28th May 1941, INF1/292.

⁵⁰ HI Weekly Report, 11th-18th June 1941, INF1/292.

⁵¹ John Reith, (edited by C.H. Stuart), *The Reith Diaries*, (Collins, 1975) 23rd June 1941, p. 278.

⁵² Channon diary, 6th June 1941, p. 307.

⁵³ HI Weekly Report, 4th-11th June 1941, INF1/292.

⁵⁴ MO FR 744, *Notes on Churchill vs Hore-Belisha*, 18th June 1941.

⁵⁵ HI Weekly Report, 11th-18th June 1941, INF1/292.

⁵⁶ *Hansard*, 10th June 1941, vol. 372, cols. 70-79.

The state in which our Army was left...when the Hon. Gentleman had ended his two years and seven months tenure at the War Office, during the greater part of which he was also responsible for production and supply, was lamentable. We were short of every essential supply...but most particularly of those modern weapons...which have proved themselves the vital necessities of modern war, a fact which he is now prepared to suggest we are so purblind and outdated as not to be able to comprehend.⁵⁷

Hore-Belisha objected to this charge on the grounds that he had endeavoured to equip a Continental Army but he was prevented from doing so by opinion prevalent at the time. "I do not seek to be judged by my achievements, but by what I tried to do" he maintained.⁵⁸ Churchill, however, was unrelenting and spoke instead of how Hore-Belisha's "dismal legacy" made the situation very difficult for his successors. The public, who had a very great respect for Hore-Belisha and who been one of the most popular ministers of Chamberlain's Government, thought such censure unfair and unjust.⁵⁹ People were alarmed at Churchill's sensitivity to criticism and his reaction to it was seen as an example of him being out of touch with public opinion for it came at the same time as censure over his speech on the exaltation of air raid victims.⁶⁰ The commonest single reaction, MO found, "was to feel that Churchill [had] broken his own rule of fair play, national unity and no recriminations – precisely the things for which he [was] admired".⁶¹ Women in particular thought "it was dirty on Churchill's part" and that his attack on Hore-Belisha damaged his reputation as a gentleman and unifying figure.⁶² Whilst MO agreed with HI that Churchill was still the most popular figure in the Government, it warned that such small actions on Churchill's part would have an accumulative effect; his position was not so secure as it had previously been and was undermined by the lack of advancement on the military front in the first year of Churchill's premiership. People were beginning to question whether "we really have got much more ruthless" and thought that Hore-Belisha ought to be given a job in the Cabinet as his vigour would bring "fresh blood in to a sadly wanting Government".⁶³

⁵⁷ *Hansard*, 10th June 1941, vol. 372, Col. 142.

⁵⁸ *Hansard*, 10th June 1941, vol. 372, Col. 143.

⁵⁹ MO File Reports 132, *Public Opinion and Mr. Hore-Belisha*, 6th August 1940 and 744, *Notes on Churchill vs Hore-Belisha*, 18th June 1941.

⁶⁰ MO FR 744, *Notes on Churchill vs Hore-Belisha*, 18th June 1941.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.* and MO FR, 749, *Further Notes on Hore-Belisha and Churchill*, 23rd June 1941.

At this time, Churchill's speeches also failed to enthuse both the House of Commons and the public. Channon noted how, during a speech on production, "there were few of his oratorical tricks. Someone", he wrote significantly, "had told him that we are weary of his eloquence."⁶⁴ MO found a similar decline in enthusiasm for his speeches among the public with one in five making unfavourable comments.⁶⁵ The main criticisms were that they were evasive and boring and that he tried to impress with his cheerfulness.

The debates on Greece and Crete at once revealed the turning tide of opinion against Churchill and that the gap between Churchill and his Government had slowly started to close. It was also the portent of how the changing fortunes of the military situation affected Churchill's standing amongst the public. Bearing these factors in mind, 1942 did not auger well for Churchill. The Japanese attacks in the Far East at the end of 1941 and the consistent failure to parry the onslaught of the Japanese Blitzkrieg, together with a lack-lustre campaign against the German Army dampened spirits and engendered a great deal of discontentment. At all levels of opinion, criticism was directed against the Government which, Channon thought, was "doomed".⁶⁶ The lack of military initiative was blamed on the lack of materiel and equipment which in turn was blamed on the Government's incompetence. "There are those of us who believe that a total war effort cannot be directed by a Cabinet that doesn't add up and gets a lot of answers wrong" wrote Cassandra in the *Daily Mirror*.⁶⁷ Discontentment grew with Churchill's absence in December.

Churchill had gone to Washington to discuss the changes in the direction of the war brought about by the Japanese attacks in the Far East. On his return, as the *Daily Mirror* predicted, he "found a very different atmosphere from that in which he left for America".⁶⁸ The reason, the *Mirror* explained, was "Parliamentary and public indignation over the bungling incompetence and complacency that have placed Singapore and Australia in dire peril".⁶⁹ Parliament, too, was in need of a boost of confidence and Churchill's first appearance in the House after his return was met with a mixed reception: "some [said] it was enthusiastic; others [said] that it had about it a note of

⁶⁴ Channon diary 29th July 1941, p. 310.

⁶⁵ MO FR, 749, *Further Notes on Hore-Belisha and Churchill*, 23rd June 1941.

⁶⁶ Channon diary, 18th December 1941, p. 315.

⁶⁷ *Daily Mirror*, 7th January 1942.

⁶⁸ *Daily Mirror* 15th January 1942.

⁶⁹ Beaverbrook to Churchill, 17th February 1942, CHAR20/52.

reserve”.⁷⁰ When asked his opinion, Randolph Churchill replied non-committally that it was “nothing like the reception Chamberlain got when he returned from Munich”.⁷¹ But that there should be a difference of opinion as to his reception revealed that there was still a certain level of support for Churchill in the House, even if it was tempered by a troubled spirit.

In order to silence his critics, Churchill called for a vote of confidence at the end of January 1942, although this was an unpopular move. The 1922 Committee asked him to withdraw the motion, but he was “in an angry mood” and fumed with rage and would not back down.⁷² The disunity highlighted by the Committee’s request caused considerable embarrassment to the Government who asked that the Committee retract its demand but it was then denied that it had ever asked such a thing.⁷³ Besides comment on the propriety of holding a vote of confidence at all, the newspapers also considered the issue of Churchill broadcasting from the House but it was criticism of the Government which was the most conspicuous topic. Even the *Daily Express*, which was a strongly pro-Government and pro-Churchill publication, had its grievances to air and wrote that “only the Premier is pleased with the team”.⁷⁴ Cassandra in the *Daily Mirror* reminded his readers that “Half the Government is suspect. Men with bad political records hold high office. Proved failures still cling on in circumstances that suggest that nepotism is not as dead as it might be. They hide in the blanket of the Prime Minister’s reputation.”⁷⁵ What is striking is that there was no criticism of Churchill personally.

In his opening statement, Churchill cleverly outlined the seriousness of the debate and the implications it had on the further prosecution of the war. He recalled that an honest debate was a vital process of democracy and that each Member should feel free to vote as he wished. But he also pointed out how Britain was the lynchpin in the Allied war effort which subtly underlined his own indispensability. A revolt against the Government, he said, would bring about its downfall which would reverberate around the world and in all likelihood reverberate unfavourably.⁷⁶ As he spoke, one could “actually feel the wind of opposition dropping sentence by sentence” and by the time he had finished it was clear that “there was really no opposition at all – only a

⁷⁰ Nicholson diary, 20th January 1942, p. 206.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Channon diary, 22nd January 1942, p. 318 and Harvie-Watt, *Most of My Life*, pp. 74-75.

⁷³ Related in, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 24th January 1942.

⁷⁴ *Daily Express*, 28th January 1942.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ *Hansard*, 27th January 1942, vol. 377, cols. 592-594.

certain uneasiness”.⁷⁷ But this effect was only temporary, for in the opinion of Channon who had also been uncharacteristically impressed by his speech, “he mollified no-one.”⁷⁸ The debate continued over the next two days but rather than airing grievances, it highlighted the disunity amongst the critics. Some called for Churchill’s resignation as Minister of Defence, others for him to step down as Prime Minister. Sir Herbert Williams, MP for South Croydon, blurred the issue by calling for Churchill to be Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, but not Minister of Defence, whilst still others thought that a reconstruction of the Cabinet would suffice.⁷⁹ What was clear was that there was a great deal of malcontent yet no-one knew how to improve the situation. Only Churchill, it seemed, provided the answer.

On the day of the debate the *Daily Express* carried a long feature article expounding the legend that Churchill would become: “If Churchill brings his country to victory...he will, without doubt, go down as the greatest man in English history. No Prime Minister of the sixty ministries since Walpole...has upon his tombstone ‘He saved England from death.’”⁸⁰ His Legend in the making, thought the *Daily Express*, would surely combat lack of faith amongst MPs. But as the *Daily Mirror* pointed out, and which was taken up by Wardlaw-Milne during the debate, the vote in effect proved little.⁸¹ No-one was questioning Churchill’s own abilities, merely those of his colleagues and the vote itself made it impossible to distinguish between the two: a vote against the Government would clearly bring down Churchill which few people were proposing. The public too picked up on this dilemma and many thought it was “unfair of the Prime Minister to try and subdue criticism by throwing his personal popularity into the balance”.⁸² But it was feared that “further attempts at ‘white-washing’ might damage the Prime Minister’s own reputation.”⁸³ Nonetheless, such criticism was not particularly long-lived. Immediately after the vote of confidence a number of people felt “resentment that the Prime Minister should have been compelled by the House to add to the strain of a full-dress debate to his already great burdens”, demonstrating concern about his workload but evidently forgetting that it was Churchill himself who had called for the vote.⁸⁴ People were

⁷⁷ Nicolson diary, 27th January 1942, p. 206.

⁷⁸ Channon diary, 27th January 1942, p. 318.

⁷⁹ *Hansard*, 27th January 1942, vol. 372, cols. 639-647. The rumours which surrounded the debate, that a Cabinet reconstruction would follow, certainly helped Churchill’s position.

⁸⁰ “The Man Whose Words the World Awaits”, *Daily Express*, 27th January 1942.

⁸¹ *Daily Mirror*, 26th January 1942.

⁸² Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 19th-25th January 1942, INF1/292.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Home Intelligence Weekly Report 26th January -2nd February 1942, INF1/292.

“generally pleased at the overwhelming vote of confidence obtained by him” and were “behind the Prime Minister almost to a man”.⁸⁵

Despite such portents of trouble, in this particular round Churchill weathered the storm both in public and in Parliament. Although criticisms had not been levelled at him personally, the result of the vote of confidence (464 to 1 for the Government) was viewed as a personal triumph for him. The result made “everyone feel that despite the criticisms, the whole country is behind the Prime Minister”.⁸⁶ It showed above all that only Churchill could unite the country, that as soon as he went abroad the factions and kingmakers came into play and threatened to destabilise the war effort. Churchill alone was “the symbol of national unity”.⁸⁷

If Churchill personally survived the vote of confidence, there was still a great deal of dissatisfaction with the Government both within parliament and the country as a whole. A Zec cartoon in the *Daily Mirror* shortly after the debate suggested that the vote had done little to curb criticism. (Figure 44). It showed Churchill throwing water over

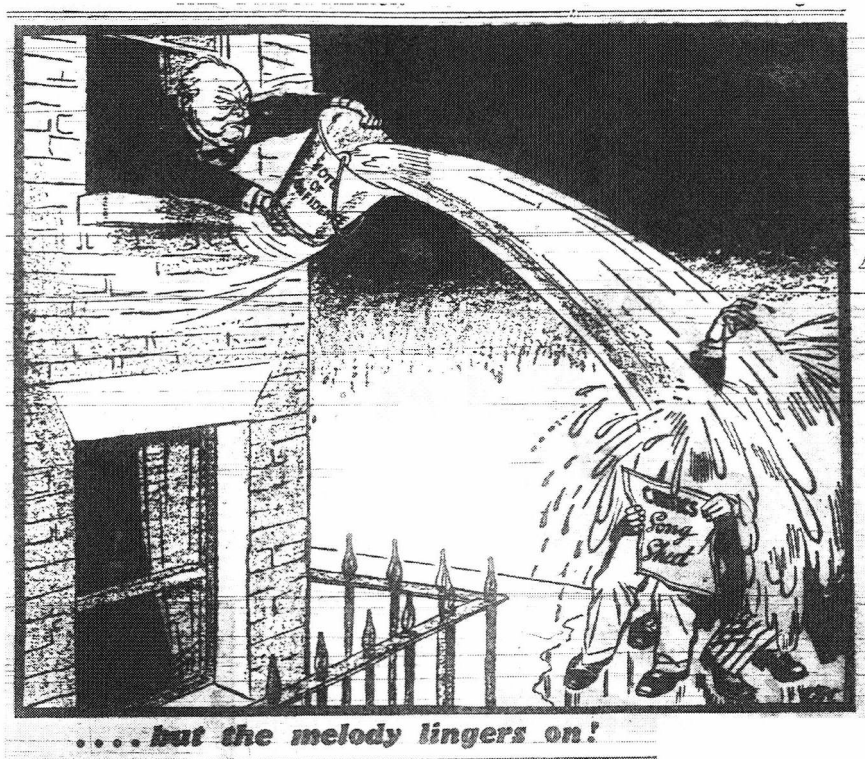


Figure 44 *Daily Mirror* 30th January 1941

⁸⁵ Home Intelligence Weekly Report 26th January - 2nd February 1942, INF1/292.

⁸⁶ MO FR 1064, *The Big Debate*, 29th January 1942.

⁸⁷ MO FR 1052, *The Far East and the Future*, 22nd January 1942.

the singing band of critics to silence them, but, Zec warned, “the melody lingers on”. While there was “great faith in Mr. Churchill’s leadership” amongst the public there was also “less confidence in the Government as a whole”.⁸⁸ Such idolisation of Churchill no doubt contributed to the lack of faith in the Government because, as MO found, “people constantly measure every other politician against the yardstick of Churchill and when they do, many are found wanting”.⁸⁹ This put Churchill under a great deal of pressure to reconstruct his Government, which he did in stages over the course of the next few weeks. Beaverbrook was moved from Supply to the new post of Minister of War Production, from which he resigned fifteen days later; Kingsley Wood was removed from the War Cabinet; the ineffectual and dipsomaniac Greenwood was ‘encouraged’ to resign; and, most controversially, Cripps was brought in as Lord Privy Seal. Some 50 per cent of people thought that the first round of changes were an improvement, and with the third set of appointments at the end of February, this figure rose to 58 per cent.⁹⁰ The Cabinet changes certainly helped to preserve Churchill’s command of the House and pacify the small groups among the public who shared the same disquietude, but on the whole, confidence in Churchill personally was “maintained at a high level throughout” and his leadership was never seriously in question.⁹¹

A rapid succession of military defeats soon disturbed the complacency generated by the outcome of the debate. As was examined in Chapter 4, the loss of Singapore and the escape of the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* greatly upset both public and Parliament alike and during the months that followed, Churchill came under increasing personal attack. While among the public his position was unchallenged, it was clear that the events of the first few months of 1942 gave people “second thoughts about him” and there appeared for the first time “a small but significant body of anti-Churchill feeling.”⁹² In Parliament this feeling was more pronounced and some suspected Churchill of avoiding the House to escape the bitterness and only made an appearance “when searching for kudos”.⁹³ Churchill himself was aware of his declining popularity, remarking, “I am like a bomber pilot...I go out at night and I know that one night I shall not return”.⁹⁴

His visit to America in June to discuss the war effort with Roosevelt opened the way once more for the critics to become vocal. During his absence Sir John Wardlaw-

⁸⁸ Police Duty Room report, 18th-31st January 1942, HO199/505.

⁸⁹ MO FR 1052, *The Far East and the Future*, 22nd January 1942.

⁹⁰ MO FR 1111, *Opinion of the Cabinet Changes*, 24th February 1942. Appendix 4, Tables 16 and 17.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Channon diary, 7th May 1942, p. 330.

⁹⁴ Churchill quoted in Nicolson diary, 22nd April 1942, p. 223.

Milne put forward a motion of no confidence which was also supported by Roger Keyes, the hero of the Norway debate, and Hore-Belisha. The debate opened on 1st July with a statement by Wardlaw-Milne who made the claim that Churchill should relinquish the post of Minister of Defence as he already carried too much responsibility and as a result could not do the job effectively.⁹⁵ But just as the opposition to the Government had been disunited in January, so again were the critics disorganised in their case. In contrast to Wardlaw-Milne, Keyes argued that Churchill did not do enough as Minister of Defence and that he ought to be given still wider powers.⁹⁶ On the second day of the debate, Aneurin Bevan opened the case against the Government with a powerful speech which was later followed by a devastating attack on Churchill by Hore-Belisha.⁹⁷ In it he highlighted how Churchill had consistently misled opinion and given false hopes regarding equipment and the anticipated outcome of various military campaigns. Churchill's reply was vague, if eloquent. In Channon's opinion, he "skated round dangerous corners and by clever evasion managed to ignore the question as to whether he had ordered Tobruk to be held. Nevertheless he had his usual effect of intoxicating his listeners."⁹⁸ The *Daily Mirror* was equally circumspect in its criticism yet far more scathing. It asked whose judgement had been at fault over the Libyan campaign and concluded, "Mr. Churchill always bravely takes his full share of responsibility. But after careful reading of the speech we still feel no additional explanation had been given of the Libyan disaster".⁹⁹ The vote of confidence, originally moved as a lack of faith in the direction of the war, came to be a test of Churchill's personal popularity and suitability for the job of war leader, much more so than the vote six months earlier. The result of 475 to 25 in favour of the Government gave Churchill the sanction he needed both at home and abroad, but once again, it was not representative of true feeling in the House. The impression the debate left on Harold Nicolson was "one of dissatisfaction and anxiety" and, he added, "I do not think that it will end there".¹⁰⁰

For the public the matter was rather less complex. There was a certain amount of disdain that the vote should have been called at all and that the "washing of dirty linen in public" only served to depress people and "encourage the Germans" but there was

⁹⁵ *Hansard*, 1st July 1942, Vol. 381, Cols. 224-237.

⁹⁶ *Hansard*, 1st July 1942, Vol. 381, Cols. 237-247.

⁹⁷ *Hansard*, 2nd July 1942, Aneurin Bevan, Vol. 381, Cols. 527-591 and Hore-Belisha, Vol. 381, Cols. 572-583.

⁹⁸ Channon diary, 2nd July 1942, p. 334.

⁹⁹ *Daily Mirror*, 3rd July 1942.

¹⁰⁰ Nicolson diary, 2nd July 1942, p. 232.

little sympathy for “the enemies of Mr. Churchill”.¹⁰¹ Cripps wrote of how “the vote of censure does not in any way represent the general reaction of the country” and in a definite victory for him, HI found that Churchill’s “position as the obvious leader of the people appears to have been unaffected by the debate”, and he still inspired “widespread loyalty”.¹⁰² The following week “loyalty to the Prime Minister, faith in him and his popularity” were specifically referred to as though refuting the censure cast by politicians and the press.¹⁰³ Where there was criticism, it was out of concern that he took too much upon himself with his dual roles as Prime Minister and Minister of Defence and that he took too much responsibility for “the errors of his second rate colleagues”.¹⁰⁴ No doubt was cast about his abilities as Prime Minister nor was it questioned that he was “the only man to lead us, because he is the only man who will never give in to peace feelers and will fight to crush the enemy to the last”.¹⁰⁵ This continued admiration for Churchill contrasts sharply with the usual understanding of this period in the war, that it saw the lowest point in his popularity and that Churchill’s position with the public was seriously undermined by Sir Stafford Cripps.

In late January 1942, Cripps returned from Moscow where he had been Ambassador since 1940. He was given an effusive welcome in the press as he had resigned his post in protest at the limited aid Russia was receiving in its struggle against the Germans and he intended to return to Britain to push the Government to increase its aid package. Given the public’s deep-seated admiration for Russia, it was clear that his cause would hold immediate public sympathy and he gained further respect by being the suspected confidant of the revered Stalin. MO’s opinion polls showed a consistently high approval rating which remained at around 70 per cent for five months¹⁰⁶ and another poll found that 79 per cent showed strong approval of him.¹⁰⁷ However, it was Cripps’ ‘Postscript’ broadcast on 8th February that put him firmly on the political map.¹⁰⁸ MO found that the broadcast was heard by over half the people in its sample, and that 93 per cent approved of it, higher than any of Churchill’s broadcasts.¹⁰⁹ Its popularity was based on the fact that it “said something which many people were feeling which had not been so clearly put before. He said that we must all do more in the war, everyone of us,

¹⁰¹ Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 30th June - 7th July 1942, INF1/292.

¹⁰² Cripps to Churchill, 2nd July 1942, CHAR20/56 and *ibid.*.

¹⁰³ Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 7th-14th July 1942, INF1/292.

¹⁰⁴ Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 30th June - 7th July 1942, INF1/292.

¹⁰⁵ Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 14th-21st July 1942, INF1/292.

¹⁰⁶ MO FR 1111, *Opinion on the Cabinet Changes*, 24th February 1942.

¹⁰⁷ MO FR 1207, *Prestige of Government Leaders*, 16th April 1942.

¹⁰⁸ MO FR 1118, *Article for the New Statesman*, 28th February 1942.

¹⁰⁹ MO FR 1166, *Sir Stafford Cripps*, 23rd March 1942.

and do it quick [sic].”¹¹⁰ His “insight and frankness and human sympathy in his voice” were also highly praised and served as a contrast to Churchill’s high rhetoric and grandiloquent orations.¹¹¹ But Cripps’ popularity equally rested on his energy and innovation which was found to be lacking across the Government. “It was felt that here at last was a man who would get things moving, whose emergence into political prominence had some hopes for present toughening up and future reorganisation.”¹¹² The public hoped “more and more for new blood”¹¹³ and so his admission to the Cabinet as Leader of the House and Lord Privy Seal in mid-February met with “unanimous approval”.¹¹⁴ Cripps’ lack of party affiliation also helped to secure a widespread following as he alienated no-one on party political grounds, although his championship of left wing politics and his connections with Russia meant that he was more readily identified with the growing current of opinion that favoured social reform.¹¹⁵ Indeed, people felt that he ought to be the leader of the Home Front, leaving Churchill more free to pursue military, foreign policy and strategic matters.¹¹⁶

The rise in Cripps’ popularity was uncharacteristically swift for most people had never heard of him when he returned from Moscow.¹¹⁷ Whereas public reactions were usually “slow and sluggish”, on his return attitudes towards him changed with a “knockout” blow.¹¹⁸ It was perhaps this sudden rise, together with the more vocal criticisms of Churchill in the first half of 1942, which created the impression of Cripps’ massive popularity and challenge to Churchill. It was thought that Cripps brought a “new note of urgency” to the Cabinet and it was hoped that he would also bring more realism.¹¹⁹ Rumours followed press speculation that he would replace Churchill in a few

¹¹⁰ Ibid. and 1118, *Article for New Statesman*, 28th February 1942. This had, in fact been said by Churchill in July 1940 in his most popular speech of that year (“The War of the Unknown Warriors”) showing how people had already forgotten the speech but also how the public were consistent in their needs.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² MO FR 1375, *Second Report on Sir Stafford Cripps*, 6th August 1942.

¹¹³ Spry diary quoted in Peter Clarke, *The Cripps Version*, (Allen Lane, 2002) p. 265.

¹¹⁴ Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 16th-23rd February 1942, INF1/292. Cripps’ promotion also did “much to restore Mr. Churchill’s popularity”.

¹¹⁵ Cripps had been coerced into becoming a member of the Labour party so that Ramsay MacDonald might appoint him Solicitor General, but he was expelled from the party in 1939. See Clarke, *The Cripps Version* for more details of Cripps’ political life.

¹¹⁶ MO FR, 1166, *Sir Stafford Cripps*, 23rd March 1942.

¹¹⁷ MO FR 1118, *Article for New Statesman*, 28th February 1942.

¹¹⁸ MO FR 1166, *Sir Stafford Cripps*, 23rd March 1942.

¹¹⁹ Home Intelligence Weekly Reports, 23rd February - 1st March and 2nd-9th March 1942, INF1/292.

months, which re-emerged sporadically until June.¹²⁰ But as Beaverbrook pointed out in his resignation letter, “Cripps is a fleeting passion” and this he did indeed prove to be.¹²¹

Already by July, MO found his popularity to be unstable and “undercurrents of suspicions” were creeping into public attitudes towards him.¹²² This may have been linked with his mission to India, which, under American pressure, aimed at resolving the difficulties with the Indian leaders who were pushing for independence. At first there was “considerable interest” in Cripps’ mission, although it was “too complex for the majority of working men to follow”, but this enthusiasm soon dwindled when he returned having failed to reach a solution.¹²³ His involvement with diplomatic affairs was perhaps Cripps’ greatest mistake in terms of maintaining widespread public support. As seen in the previous chapter, such issues rarely gained the public’s interest except where they involved a central, popular figure but it was extremely difficult to hold their attention and for Cripps, his participation in Indian affairs also meant the abandonment of his push for social reform. Through the summer this became more noticeable as he began increasingly to toe the line of the Cabinet that the war ought to be won before any discussion of post-war plans be made. Because of this, there was felt to be “something fatalistic about people’s ideas of what happens to a politician when he attains Cabinet rank” and Cripps was seen to be “entangled in the Government web”.¹²⁴ People were unsure whether or not to blame Cripps for his failure or the Government for stifling him, but the hopes for reform and the reinvigoration of the Cabinet’s war effort had, by September, crumbled to dust and he proved to be no threat to Churchill.

The support shown by the public for Churchill in the aftermath of the vote of confidence in July 1942, confirms that Cripps did not undermine Churchill’s position, at least in the eyes of the public, and defies the common historical assumption that July saw the lowest point in Churchill’s popularity.¹²⁵ The 78 per cent recorded in the polls may have reflected disappointment in the military situation in North Africa, but it did not

¹²⁰ Home Intelligence Weekly Reports 18th-24th May and 16th-23rd June 1942, INF1/292. MO also found that people did not look to Cripps as an immediate replacement for Churchill, rather hoped that he would be post-war Prime Minister. MO, 16th April 1942, Topic Collection, (TC) 25/14/D, MO Archive, University of Sussex.

¹²¹ Beaverbrook to Churchill, 17th February 1942, CHAR20/52.

¹²² MO FR 1361-2, *Report on Who Likes and Dislikes Sir Stafford Cripps*, 28th July 1942.

¹²³ Home Intelligence Weekly Report 23-30th March 1942, INF1/292. Later, the Indian cause merely antagonised the British public. As Gandhi lay close to death following an extended hunger strike people thought it was “entirely his own choice”, “let him die and good riddance”. Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 16th-23rd February 1943, INF1/292.

¹²⁴ MO FR 1394, *Third Report on Sir Stafford Cripps: The Growth of Disappointment*, September 1942.

¹²⁵ See also Chapter 4.

reveal the overall attitude to him. The public's high regard for him was in clear contrast to parliamentary opinion. Just as in February, the public's purview was narrower than that of parliament and fewer issues were considered before making a decision about Churchill's suitability for the job, which was partly due to the public's restricted access to information. But the opinions of an ordinary person held far fewer implications than did an MP casting his vote over the fate of the Government and so people did not need to consider their opinions quite so carefully. This somewhat ill-considered opinion was symptomatic of the public's attitude towards politics in general. There were, of course, certain contingents amongst the public which were highly politically motivated, but these tended to be minority groups, even if they were noisy ones.

Political quiescence was particularly marked during the crisis of 1940 when Churchill himself was of the opinion "We cannot have party politics in wartime".¹²⁶ The public also felt that it was not "really any good going on trying to be politically enthusiastic or democratically excited" because the country's leaders "may let them down anyway in the end".¹²⁷ Such a pessimistic outlook on the inadequacies of the Government was complemented by limited knowledge and understanding. In the summer of 1940, MO found that three-quarters of its sample could not name the key Cabinet ministers¹²⁸ and that only a little over a third knew of the Cabinet changes in May 1941, of whom almost half had no opinion about the changes.¹²⁹ Women were particularly badly informed with over half of working-class women not reading a daily newspaper and women were far less inclined to voice an opinion on any given matter, but especially politics.¹³⁰ MO consistently found the 'no opinion' group among women to be far higher than that among men, for example 58 per cent of women felt they could not express their political inclination as opposed to 29 per cent of men.¹³¹ Obtaining a definitive answer from women proved easier once the men had returned home from work, supporting the idea that women's opinions were often dependent upon those of

¹²⁶ Churchill to R.A. Butler, 26th December 1940, R.A. Butler papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford, RAB 1/1.

¹²⁷ MO FR 151, *Public Opinion about Mr. Chamberlain*, 5th July 1940.

¹²⁸ MO FR 361, *What is Public Opinion?*, August 1940.

¹²⁹ MO FR 684, *Cabinet Changes*, 5th May 1941.

¹³⁰ M.A. Adams, *The Home Market*, (Allen and Unwin, 1939) p. 113. Appendix 4, Table 18.

¹³¹ MO FR 1333, *Public Satisfaction With the Prime Minister*, 1st July 1942. James Hinton, however, points out that the larger 'don't know' category among women "probably represented, not disproportionate ignorance, but a sensible reluctance to engage in the male pastime of cloaking uncertainty in dogmatism". James Hinton, "The Apathy School" p. 268. However, contemporary accounts support the idea that women generally had little interest in politics. See Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War?* chapter 4, especially pp. 146-7.

their menfolk.¹³² Instead of offering their own thoughts, women regularly gave such responses as “you must ask my husband”.¹³³ Women were, however, far more ready to judge a politician by his face alone whereas men were more usually of the opinion that “you can’t judge a man by his dial”.¹³⁴ Among the politically apathetic (and especially women) there was a tendency to follow politics through personality rather than issues as this made it more accessible and easier to follow. Thus the politics of food and supply, for example, were followed through the careers of Lords Woolton and Beaverbrook, while Churchill’s forays into diplomacy helped to popularise an otherwise unpopular topic.

The minutiae of politics received less sympathy with a more generic feeling of “what’s the point when there’s a war on?”¹³⁵ By November 1942, there was “growing disapproval of party politics” as it was thought that members of Parliament were “often compelled by the Party machine to vote against the personal wishes of the people they represent.”¹³⁶ The same reservation was also applied to Churchill before he became Conservative leader when it was thought that his independent spirit might be “curbed by the party machine”.¹³⁷ But Churchill’s lack of bowing to the Conservative line was precisely what appealed to people. “The country trusts you”, wrote one MP to Churchill, “because they believe that you are not controlled by any one party machine.”¹³⁸ This enabled those who were uninterested in or mistrustful of party politics, as well as people of all political complexions, to put their faith in Churchill. “Individuals may be ardent socialists”, wrote MO, “or confirmed Tories; both speak of Winston Churchill as the ‘national leader.’”¹³⁹ A figure of a more pronounced political hue, such as Bevin or Halifax could never have had such wide appeal as the figurehead of the nation.

Churchill’s unifying powers lent themselves readily to the political truce that was observed under his premiership.¹⁴⁰ Under this agreement the three main parties agreed that seats which fell vacant during the war would not be contested but be retained by the party which won the seat in the last election before the war began. Independent

¹³² Mass-Observation, *Britain*, (Penguin, 1939) p. 101.

¹³³ MO FR 1453, *Women’s Opinions*, 18th October 1942 and 1592 *Women’s Opinions*, February 1943.

¹³⁴ MO FR 1411, *Fourth Report on Sir Stafford Cripps*, 4th September 1942.

¹³⁵ MO FR 41, *Moran Mentality*, February 1940.

¹³⁶ Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 28th July – 4th August 1942, INF1/292.

¹³⁷ Home Intelligence Daily Report, 25th July 1940, INF1/264.

¹³⁸ J.A. Cecil-Wright to Churchill, 24th September 1940, CHAR20/8.

¹³⁹ MO FR 1890, *Mass-Observation Bulletin*, 16th August 1943.

¹⁴⁰ Although this was the official policy, there was some disquiet amongst the Conservatives that the public had been barraged with left wing propaganda throughout the war. See Paul Addison, *The Road to 1945* p. 128.

candidates were, of course, exempt from this pact which gave rise to a variety of candidates coming forward promoting single issues such as “bomb Berlin” and “stop the war” as well as the political extremes of Communism and Fascism. Where an election was held, candidates almost without exception pledged their allegiance to the National Government, or more usually to Churchill personally.¹⁴¹ A.C. Spearman, the Conservative candidate at Scarborough in October 1941, for example, “used every possible occasion to couple his name with that of the Prime Minister”.¹⁴² His policy was “the very orthodox one of ‘Support Churchill’. He does not seem to have come out with any other policy than just this. He was always stressing the importance of national unity and made little or no reference to social and economic matters”.¹⁴³ The same reliance on Churchill was found at the Wrekin in the same month and at various other by-elections throughout the war.¹⁴⁴ Whereas individual candidates could appeal to the mood of the moment on single issues, the Government candidates could only “appeal blankly for support on general grounds of patriotism, the need for unity, the need to support Churchill”.¹⁴⁵ The election literature from Newark by-election, held in June 1943, exemplifies this reliance on Churchill.¹⁴⁶ Here, three candidates opposed the Government’s nominee (Sidney Shephard), including one standing for the Common Wealth Party (E.W. Moeran). The others represented the Independent Liberals (Tom Pepper) and what was classified as Independent Progressive (Alan Dawrant).¹⁴⁷ Shephard’s flyer urged the voter to “send him to Churchill” while Pepper and Dawrant both stressed how it was regrettable that Churchill should have become Conservative leader. However, they both felt able to see him as a neutral leader who was being exploited by the Tories for their own political ends. As independent candidates, they reminded the electorate that they could remain loyal to Churchill without being tied by party considerations. As an additional boost to promote national unity, Churchill sent a

¹⁴¹ There were 73 by-elections during the war contested by 104 candidates, and also 63 unopposed changes of seat. Figures from F.W.S. Craig (ed.) *Chronology of Parliament By-Elections, 1833-1987* (Parliamentary Research Services, 1987). Paul Addison gives slightly different figures of 75 contested and 66 unopposed. Addison, “By-Elections of the Second World War” in Chris Cook and John Ramsden (eds.) *By-Elections in British Politics* (Macmillan, 1973), pp. 165-190.

¹⁴² MO FR 962, *Scarborough*, October 1941.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ MO FR 90, *Wrekin*, 8th October 1941.

¹⁴⁵ MO FR 906, *A Note on Scarborough and Wrekin By-Elections*, October 1941.

¹⁴⁶ See Appendix 6, by-election literature.

¹⁴⁷ It is difficult to apply labels to the independent candidates as the single issues for which they fought did not necessarily follow any particular partisan line. Also in some elections candidates stood who already had local notoriety and based their campaign around this. The labels used here are taken from F.W.S. Craig, (ed.) *British Parliamentary Election Results, 1918-1949*, (Parliamentary Research Services, 1983).

personal letter of commendation to each Government candidate, and from 1942 this was also endorsed by the leaders of the three other main political parties.¹⁴⁸ All of the letters followed the same pattern saying that the by-elections were not conducive to the war effort and that the independents, by putting themselves forward and forcing an election, were reckless and disloyal.¹⁴⁹ Wide publicity was ensured to the letters through the agency of the MoI.¹⁵⁰

Such a reliance on Churchill by all political candidates at once gave unwarranted exposure to him, but also cemented in the public mind that Churchill *was* the Government and gave the impression that he alone ran the country. Admittedly, the campaigns were conducted on a local level and scant interest in the by-elections was shown nationally unless there was some other issue involved, usually scandal or political aberration. But still, it touched the lives of millions of people at some point during the course of the war. The appeal to Churchill by all candidates also strengthened the notion of his personal unifying power which was borne out by the quarrels which emerged in his absences during 1942 and which were subsequently smoothed over on his return. This was, no doubt, aided by Churchill's enfeebled party affiliation as it did not alienate the politically motivated and provided an easy answer in the form of one figure for the apathetic. But underlying this popular support for Churchill on the grounds of political neutrality, there was also a rising tide of discontentment. Whilst people had generally come to accept Churchill by the end of 1940 after initial scepticism, people were becoming weary of his speeches by 1941 and in 1942 this undercurrent was to increase in strength. Although at no point, at least in the opinion poll nadir of July 1942, did this unrest eclipse his popularity, it signified the eternal restlessness and ennui of the public and was an omen for the rest of the war.

Post-war Planning and Reconstruction

As early as 1940, the British public began to show interest in the conditions of the post-war world. Many people had been disillusioned by Lloyd George's promise of building a

¹⁴⁸ Thomas Dugdale and James Stuart agreed in mid-1942 that the leaders of each political party would send a joint letter of commendation to the Government candidate in order to reinforce the authority of the coalition. Indecipherable signature, Treasury to Peck, 15th June 1942, CHAR2/452A.

¹⁴⁹ For a sample letter see Appendix 7: Premier's letter to Government candidate at Hornsey by-elections. Churchill to the Hornsey candidate, L.D. Gammans, June 1941.

¹⁵⁰ For example, E.M. Watson to Personal Private Secretary on duty, 3rd May 1941, CHAR2/428 regarding the King's Norton by-election.

'land fit for heroes' during the First World War as his promise proved empty in the widespread unemployment that characterised the inter-war period. By the time of the second war, people were wary of being similarly duped by false hopes and unfounded promises put forward by a Government that had no intention or else no means with which to fulfil them.¹⁵¹ As it turned out in the first part of the war at least, the Government admitted no such ambition and steadfastly refused to publish any peace aims. Both Chamberlain, but more especially Churchill, took the view that to give "precise aims would be compromising, whereas vague principles would disappoint".¹⁵² In addition, Churchill claimed on many occasions, it was impossible to anticipate the prevailing economic conditions of the post-war which would necessarily dictate any Government involvement with reform.

In spite of such opposition, there was a widespread demand for at least some planning for the future. Just five months into the war the *Daily Herald* argued that the promise of reform would induce people to work all the harder and bring the war to a speedy conclusion¹⁵³ whilst Harold Nicolson spoke for many when he noted: "We must put forward a positive and revolutionary aim admitting that the old order had collapsed and asking people to fight for the new order".¹⁵⁴ The public shared the same sense of revolution and the more extreme hoped for "violent class-levelling" in the post-war world, whilst others simply wanted the current rate of the levelling of the classes to continue.¹⁵⁵ Both the public and "labour people" also hoped that this New World would be inaugurated by Mr. Churchill.¹⁵⁶ This atmosphere of revolution was taken up by certain sections of the press, especially the more sensationalist papers. The *Daily Mirror*, for example, argued that lack of planning had been responsible for all the ills that followed the First World War and urged that the same mistake should not be repeated.¹⁵⁷ On the other hand, the more conservative papers, such as the *Daily Express*, shared Churchill's view that victory should be secured before any planning be undertaken.¹⁵⁸ The same division of opinion was to be found among the public, some of whom felt it

¹⁵¹ J.A. Cecil-Wright to Churchill, 24th September 1940, CHAR20/8.

¹⁵² Churchill quoted in Nicolson diary, 22nd January 1941, p. 139.

¹⁵³ *Daily Herald*, 3rd February 1940.

¹⁵⁴ Nicolson diary, 3rd July 1940, p. 99.

¹⁵⁵ Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 25th November – 4th December 1940, INF1/292.

¹⁵⁶ Nicolson diary, 18th July 1940, p. 103 and Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 9th-15th January 1941, INF1/292. Bevin was also named as an acceptable candidate for post-war Prime Minister.

¹⁵⁷ *Daily Mirror*, 17th October 1940.

¹⁵⁸ *Daily Express*, 16th October 1940.

was “too easy to look ahead” whereas others felt that “some planning should be done”, although they had no idea what form it might take.¹⁵⁹

Such hopes for the future, vague as they were, were founded upon more concrete fears of mass-unemployment. This was especially predominant in the north and northwest which had been hardest hit by the economic conditions of the inter-war years. Other worries included a major economic slump, women losing their jobs as men were released from the forces, and a disastrous agricultural policy.¹⁶⁰ While these fears were real, the public had little idea of how to combat the problems they envisaged or what measures the Government might consider as a remedy. Even towards the end of 1941 and in spite of several proposals having been expounded in the press, Stephen Taylor of the HI Division still found the public to be “unimaginative” and that people did not “speculate on the post-war” at all. In fact, he wrote, people “speculated relatively little about the end of the war”.¹⁶¹ It seemed that people needed the dream weaving for them and had to be told what might be done.

Picture Post was the first magazine to oblige in this way and the entirety of its first issue of 1941 was devoted to “A Plan for Britain”.¹⁶² The main problem was defined by a Welsh coalminer who outlined the waste of material and manpower that was prevalent in the country. The rest of the issue carried articles written by various experts covering such topics as work, housing, social security, education, health, and leisure, each of which advocated that planning was essential for the betterment of the nation. Each article was prefaced by a simple list of “What We Want” which included jobs for all able-bodied men, a minimum wage for all able-bodied adults, everybody to live in cheerful, healthy conditions, a state medical service, and “real holidays for all”. Had the publication been issued in Germany at this time, it would have been upheld as evidence of how fanciful Nazism could be; as it was, it was hailed as a vital hope for the future. Its letters page in a later issue was filled with congratulations for “the finest issue yet” and praise was lavishly lauded by commoner and élite alike.¹⁶³ In an eerie augury of the General Election, some called for the edition to be reissued as Labour Party propaganda, whilst others complained that “the whole issue smacks of Communism”. As the weeks wore on, the letters about the issue kept pouring in so that within the space of two and a half

¹⁵⁹ Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 25th November - 4th December 1940, INF1/292.

¹⁶⁰ MO FR 857, *Report on Post-war Jobs*, 4th September 1941.

¹⁶¹ Appendix to Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 22nd-29th September 1941, INF1/292.

¹⁶² *Picture Post*, 4th January 1941.

¹⁶³ *Picture Post*, 18th January 1941. Contributors included Edith Summerskill, Lord Cecil of Chelwood, and B. Seebohm Rowntree.

months 3,000 letters had been received, 2,000 of which were on the subject of the Plan. This was an average of 200 a week on the Plan alone which compared with the usual sum of 50 per week sent in about a variety of topics.¹⁶⁴ Once initial commendations and criticisms had been made, the readers' letters page began to be filled with more and more suggestions as to how Britain could be improved. But the suggestions ranged from the quaint to the downright absurd. One woman, for example, suggested that each street collectively buy domestic labour-saving devices and loan them out to the local housewives when necessity demanded.¹⁶⁵ On a more fanciful note, one reader suggested building miniature airports on the roofs of blocks of flats. The runways would, of course, stretch over several blocks and be "reinforced and insulated and strongly built of translucent material" so that the inhabitants on the floors below would not be inconvenienced. "There is no reason", the reader continued, "why such an arrangement should prove noisy or keep out the light".¹⁶⁶ However outrageous J. Armstrong's flight of fantasy was, it was in fact only an extreme form of *Picture Post's* own vision of the future. At no point was there discussion of quite how jobs for all might be secured, or of who would pay for the re-development of the slums, or of where people might live during the building of the designer blocks of flats. Nevertheless, the responses to the plan revealed that people were genuinely desirous of a better Britain and revolutionary change. But at the same time, there was a distinct lack of reality at what was within achievable limits.

Through the following year, the public's hopes reverted to a non-committal hope for improvement in the future which "seemed to wax and wane in proportion to the severity or lightness of enemy air raids".¹⁶⁷ But by 1942, thoughts about the future were beginning to mature and people demanded to know "what leaders envisage for the post-war".¹⁶⁸ There was a generic "lack of faith in planning" and a feeling of dread that conditions might be worse than those after the First World War.¹⁶⁹ "It is thought," wrote HI, "that a definite statement by the Government – preferably by the Prime Minister – on conditions in this country after war would do much to improve the war

¹⁶⁴ *Picture Post*, 15th March 1941.

¹⁶⁵ *Picture Post*, 15th February 1941.

¹⁶⁶ *Picture Post*, 22nd February 1941.

¹⁶⁷ *Architects' Journal*, 15th January 1942 quoted in Fielding et al, *England Arise!*, p. 367.

¹⁶⁸ Home Intelligence Weekly Report 30th March - 6th April 1942, INF1/292.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

effort...The problems are so great that unless we begin to think about them now the peace would get us – as Churchill suggested – unprepared.”¹⁷⁰

The restlessness was beginning to be felt in the various political headquarters and the Conservatives set up the Post-war Problems Central Committee under the chairmanship of R.A. Butler in July 1941 with the task of “collating and presenting to the Prime Minister the views of the Conservative and Unionist Party on post-war problems”.¹⁷¹ The Committee, however, failed to engage with the public or convince people that the Conservatives were committed to redevelopment in the future and it was the Left that won the day. Many of the reforms, which the public so clearly had longed for since 1940, were already part of the left-wing ideology and so the Left in general, and Labour in particular, had less groundwork to do than the Tories in laying claim to the reform movement.¹⁷² A poll by MO in July 1942 revealed that among its sample, some 45 per cent of men and 27 per cent of women claimed that their politics lay with the left compared with just 4 and 7 per cent claiming affinity with the right.¹⁷³ Almost half of the men interviewed who said that their views had changed during the war thought that they had become more left-wing; the changes were less extreme for women, who characteristically tended to favour the status quo.¹⁷⁴

From 1942 political unrest began to manifest itself in the results of by-elections. Although these were not contested by the major parties under the terms of the political truce, the increasing appearance – and indeed success – of independent candidates showed that one section of the public at least was becoming increasingly interested in political issues. Although turnout at by-elections was often low,¹⁷⁵ from March 1942 there began a series of victories for independent candidates who usually stood on a platform of social reform and most commonly won seats from the Conservative candidate.¹⁷⁶ But it was not the number of usurped seats which was significant but the proportion of the vote that went to the independents. Often the seat would be retained by the national candidate but only by a narrow margin. A large proportion of the

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Statement quoted in Ramsden, *Age of Churchill and Eden*, p. 40. Labour’s Central Committee of Reconstruction Problems was also set up in 1941.

¹⁷² For a more thorough examination of Labour during the Second World War see Stephen Brooke, *Labour’s War*.

¹⁷³ MO FR 1333, *Public Satisfaction with the Prime Minister*, 1st July 1942. Appendix 4, Table 19.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. Appendix 4, Table 20.

¹⁷⁵ The low turnout at by-elections is classically attributed to the out-dated electoral register which had not taken into account changes of address and deaths.

¹⁷⁶ The Conservatives lost a total of nine seats during the war, National Liberals two and Labour one. Craig, *Chronology of Parliamentary By-Elections, 1833-1987*.

alternative vote went to candidates standing for, or backed by, the Common Wealth Party which had been set up by the amalgamation of the 1941 Committee and the Forward March Movement in July 1942. Under its umbrella slogan of “fair shares for all”, it promised the eradication of class privilege, a policy that had been so desirable to so many in 1940. In this way, it caught the popular mood and secured large portions of the vote in the twelve by-elections in which it stood.¹⁷⁷ From 1943, part of Common Wealth’s success was undoubtedly founded upon its embrace of the Beveridge Report and its demand that Beveridge’s proposals be implemented immediately with its new slogan of ‘Beveridge in full now!’ By calling for such a measure the party captured the public spirit.

The Beveridge Report was published in December 1942 amidst a fanfare of publicity but its dénouement had long been anticipated. Some eight months before its publication there had been “working-class interest in the Report Beveridge was working on” whilst official Government publicity began to be planned some six months beforehand and the BBC’s in October.¹⁷⁸ Shortly before its début, an anonymous well-wisher warned Churchill that “some of Beveridge’s friends are playing politics... You may perhaps think it desirable to tell Sir William Jowitt [the Minister of Social Insurance Designate] to make certain that this report does not leak out in parts before the Government has had the opportunity of considering it.”¹⁷⁹ By this date, any attempts to stifle the Report were rather redundant as Beveridge was reported in the *Daily Telegraph* on 17th November as saying that the Report would “take the country half way to Moscow”.¹⁸⁰

Once published, the public seized upon the Report immediately. Here at last was a simple plan which either directly or indirectly tackled the five giants of social ills: want, ignorance, squalor, disease and idleness. Upon this foundation the new revolutionised Britain could be built and (some of) the dreams of the previous two years could be realised. Within one day of the Report’s publication MO found that 92 per cent of

¹⁷⁷ Appendix 4, Table 21.

¹⁷⁸ Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 30th March – 6th April 1942, INF1/292 and Home Publicity Planning Committee Minutes, 28th May 1942, INF1/249. Nicolson diary, 8th October 1942, p. 247.

¹⁷⁹ Anonymous letter to Churchill, 27th October 1942, INF1/990. Robert Mackay in *Half the Battle* (Manchester University Press, 2002) lists among those giving publicity to Beveridge and his Report Cecil King (*Daily Mirror*), Tom Hopkinson and Edward Hulton (*Picture Post*), Gerald Barry (*News Chronicle*), David Astor (*Observer*), E.H. Carr (*The Times*) and journalists Francis Williams and J.B. Priestley, p. 231, note 18.

¹⁸⁰ Although Beveridge denied that he ever said this, the damage was done and the Report’s left-wing tendencies were announced to the world. William Beveridge, *Power and Influence* (Hodder and Staughton, 1953) p. 315.

people had heard of it and within eight days BIPO found that 70 per cent were in favour of implementing the social insurance scheme proposed by Beveridge immediately.¹⁸¹ In a wave of public enthusiasm, the Report sold 635,000 copies, more than any other White Paper in the history of the Stationery Office. But while it may be indicative of people's embrace of Beveridge's plans, it serves as no indication as to how many were actually read. The 210,000 words (plus the 40,000 words in appendices) were notoriously dry and although they had been redacted by Beveridge's future wife, the Report would only have been read by the committed and the politically-minded.¹⁸² Lucky it was then that the press provided more accessible summaries.

On the day of the Report's publication, all the national dailies and many local newspapers carried an abridged version of the provisions outlined by Beveridge. Some, such as the *News Chronicle*, reduced the report to a page or two, while the *Daily Express* produced a chart comparing the provisions currently available and those proposed by Beveridge (Figure 45). The points the *Express* highlighted concentrated on the benefits to be gained by individuals such as in old age and widowhood. In a similar way, the *Daily Mirror* did a more impressive job, condensing Beveridge's hefty tome to barely 100 words (Figure 46). This gave, at a glance, the essence of the plan, especially where it would benefit the *Mirror's* mainly working-class readership, for example how people would receive almost a month's wage on getting married.¹⁸³ There were surprisingly few other publications explaining the Report and the MoI only recognised the Government's own *Beveridge in Brief* and G.D.H. Cole's *Beveridge Explained*.¹⁸⁴ In spite of the large sales of the White Paper, most people would have gained their impressions from such summaries. In common with *Picture Post's* Plan for Britain in early 1941, these synopses did not go into any great detail as to how the measures could be achieved, but merely outlined what they were. Exemplifying this blinkered view, one reader of *Picture Post* wrote in replying to a letter which had asked who would pay for the scheme: "Let us stop this bleating in 1942. Let us say the money can and will be provided by the people for the people."¹⁸⁵

The enthusiasm shown for the plan by the people so early on exposed an underlying vein of scepticism that the plan was simply "a carrot for the donkey" and that

¹⁸¹ Appendix 4, Table 22. MO figure quoted in Fielding et al, *England Arise!* p. 33.

¹⁸² Peter Hennessy, *Never Again* (Jonathan Cape, 1992), p. 73.

¹⁸³ In 1938, 37.8 per cent of people earned £2/10 or less a week. M.A. Abrams, *The Home Market*, (George Allen and Unwin, 1939), p. 145. See Figures in Introduction, note 64.

¹⁸⁴ Minutes to the Executive Board, 30th March 1943, INF1/73.

¹⁸⁵ *Picture Post*, 26th December 1942.

WHAT IT DOES—

SECURITY PROVISION FOR MAN, WIFE and TWO CHILDREN (PRESENT CONTRIBUTORY CLASSES).

	PRESENT		PROPOSED in PLAN for SOCIAL SECURITY	
	AMOUNT	PERIOD AND CONDITIONS	AMOUNT	PERIOD AND CONDITIONS
UNEMPLOYMENT	38s. a week	26 weeks (followed by assistance on means test)	56s. a week.	Unlimited in time without means test at any time. Subject to attendance at a training centre if unemployment is prolonged.
DISABILITY OTHER THAN INDUSTRIAL	18s. a week	26 weeks followed by 10s. 6d. a week in disablement. Additional benefit in some cases	56s. a week.	Unlimited in time without means test at any time.
OLD AGE	£1 a week	Supplemented by Assistance Board, according to needs.	£2 a week.	On retirement, 2s. a week increase for each year of postponement of retirement. (Full rate only after transition period of 20 years. Assistance pensions on means test meanwhile.)
WIDOWHOOD	18s. a week	—	£2 a week.	Reduced by part of any earnings. 52s. a week for first 13 weeks without reduction.
MATERNITY	£2	—	£4	—
MATERNITY (if wife gainfully occupied)	£2 additional	—	36s. a week for 13 weeks additional.	—
FUNERAL	NH	—	£20.	With smaller sums for children.
INDUSTRIAL DISABILITY	Half earnings up to maximum of 35s. a week. (Plus 8s. for the two children)	Subject to compounding for lump sums	56s. a week for 13 weeks followed by pension of two-thirds earnings up to maximum of 78s. a week but not less than 56s. No compounding for total disability.	—
MEDICAL TREATMENT	General Practitioner for man, with additional treatment benefits in some cases.	—	Comprehensive medical treatment, including hospital, dental and ophthalmic, nursing and convalescent homes for whole family. Post-medical rehabilitation.	—

—& WHAT IT COSTS

EXPENDITURE.	£ Million.			
	1942	1945	1955	1965
RETIREMENT PENSIONS	94	126	190	300
UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT	84	110	109	107
DISABILITY BENEFIT	43	72	83	86
OTHER INSURANCE BENEFITS	69	44	42	42
NATIONAL ASSISTANCE	15	44	38	30
CHILDREN'S ALLOWANCES	11	110	108	100
COST OF ADMINISTRATION	20	24	24	23
HEALTH SERVICES	79	170	170	170
TOTAL	415	697	764	858

INCOME.	£ Million.			
	1942	1945	1955	1965
CONTRIBUTIONS OF INSURED PERSONS	69	194	196	192
EMPLOYERS' CONTRIBUTIONS ..	83	137	135	132
INTEREST ON FUNDS	15	15	15	15
CHARGES UPON EXCHEQUER	265	351	418	519
TOTAL	432	697	764	858

Figure 45 *Daily Express* 2nd December 1942

WHAT THE PLAN DOES FOR EVERY

How to be born, bred and buried

 ON MARRIAGE —there's a lump sum of up to— £10	 ON BECOMING A MOTHER there's a lump sum of £4 —and for three months there's 36/- a week for those who had paid jobs.	THE CHILDREN ARE CARED FOR— 8s. a week is allowed you whether you are to work or not—for every child under 16, except the first. 
 IN CASE OF ILLNESS— there's medical, dental, and hospital treatment to be had by all.	 ON GETTING BURIED there's a funeral grant of £20 for adults £6 if under 3 £10 if under 10 £15 if under 20	THERE'S PROVISION FOR WIDOWS— Widows and separated wives are to get enough to live on and bring up their children. Young childless widows will be given training for employment. 

And there's a happy old age for Darby and Joan

On retirement (ages 65 for men, 60 for women)

	
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there's a sum rising to 24s. for a single person and a sum rising to 40s. for man and wife

If you do not retire at 65 you will increase go on working.

IN UNEMPLOYMENT THEY'LL GET—

Aged 16-17	Aged 18-20	Aged 21 and over	Married men whose wives are not in paid jobs
15/-	20/-	24/-	40/-



IN ADDITION
For every child there is **8/-**

If his wife is in a paid job, the husband gets 24/- when he's out of work.

MARRIED WOMEN WORKERS 16/-

This goes for ordinary illness, etc., are looked after separately. Industrial accidents, etc., are looked after separately.

WAGE EARNERS WOULD PAY

	
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Aged 16-17 2/6 a week	Aged 16-17 2/- a week
Aged 18-20 3/6	Aged 18-20 3/-
21 and over 4/3	21 and over 3/6

The employer makes up the sum by paying a little less than you do—between 2s. and 3s. 3d.

Figure 46 *Daily Mirror* 2nd December 1942

it was too redolent of the high hopes of 1918.¹⁸⁶ There was also fear that vested interests, especially those of insurance companies that had hitherto provided pensions and benefits, would obstruct the proposals. Even before the Report was published, the press was warning that it would not automatically be put on the Statute Book. “It has been sagely prophesied”, wrote Edward Hulton, the proprietor of *Picture Post*, “that though no party will dare launch a full frontal attack upon this new People’s Charter, nevertheless a mixed and motley force of snipers are oiling their rifles and a free corps of whisperers are making ready to whisper”.¹⁸⁷ In light of such anticipated disillusionment, people waited eagerly “to know what the Government is going to do”.¹⁸⁸ As it turned out, very little for quite some time.

A debate in Parliament was held up until the middle of February 1943, during which a classic division between the Conservatives and Labour opened up. As Harold Nicolson had written earlier: “The Tory line seems to be to welcome the Report in principle, and then whittle it away by detailed criticism”.¹⁸⁹ Such criticisms were raised during the debate, leaving the Conservatives looking recalcitrant and reluctant to adopt the proposals whilst Labour emerged triumphantly brandishing the Report as its own.¹⁹⁰ The debate also revealed the distance between the Government and the backbenchers. Churchill had earlier sent round a memorandum in which he warned against the Government pledging itself to “airy visions of Utopia and Eldorado” and this line was taken up by John Anderson, in his opening statement for the Government in the House of Commons.¹⁹¹ Echoing Churchill and Oliver Lyttleton, the Minister of Production, he said that economic stability had to be ensured before Beveridge’s measures should be implemented on account of the “formidable expenditure” it would entail. But erring on the side of caution in this way did nothing to encourage faith in the Government amongst the public. By this date the Beveridge Report was regarded as “sacrosanct, ‘like the Ark of the Covenant’ quite apart from the actual benefits it promise[d]” and as such the public would stand for no vacillation.¹⁹² Already the Government had dragged its heels by delaying the debate for so long and the debate merely proved that this procrastination would continue. It also gave the impression that there was little chance

¹⁸⁶ Home Intelligence Weekly Report 8th-15th December 1942, INF1/292.

¹⁸⁷ *Picture Post*, 8th December 1942.

¹⁸⁸ Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 15th-22nd December 1942, INF1/292.

¹⁸⁹ Nicolson diary, 2nd December 1942, p. 264.

¹⁹⁰ For a more thorough account of the debate from a left wing point of view see Stephen Brooke, *Labour’s War* pp. 173-75.

¹⁹¹ Churchill to Cabinet, 12th January 1942, in Churchill, *The Second World War: The Hinge of Fate*, Appendix F.

¹⁹² Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 16th-23rd February 1943, INF1/292.

of many – or indeed any – of the proposals being implemented before the end of the war. Even the MoI thought without “any convenient summary of the Government’s undertakings” the Report “had now become a misleading instrument of propaganda”.¹⁹³ MO recorded that the proportion of people who expected all of the proposals to become law fell from 49 per cent during the debate to 34 afterwards and the pessimists who predicted that none of its suggestions would be implemented rose from 20 to 41 per cent.¹⁹⁴ This disappointment in the Government’s reactions spanned all classes and all political complexions and people were angry because the Government tried to kill, or at least shelve, the plan. That the Government was envisaging the worst possible conditions in the post-war world also caused resentment as did its failure to set up a Ministry of Social Security.¹⁹⁵ The same criticisms about the Government’s obstructiveness were also to be found in the press. On the second day of the debate the *Daily Mail* published an Illingworth cartoon showing Beveridge about to light a fuse that would blow up a barrel of dynamite upon which were trussed the five giants of poverty (Figure 47). Beveridge and the expectant crowd looked to Churchill seeking permission



Figure 47 *Daily Mail* 17th February 1943

¹⁹³ Minutes to the Executive Board, 30th March 1943, INF1/73.

¹⁹⁴ MO FR 1673, *Social Security and Parliament*, 5th May 1943, Appendix 4, Table 23.

¹⁹⁵ Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 16th-23rd February 1942, INF1/292.

to light the fuse, but Churchill was shown with his back turned, looking pensive. Here, Churchill was depicted as being representative of the obstreperous Government and he was no longer viewed as a separate figurehead as he had been so often in the past and all the bitterness directed towards the Government also came to be directed towards Churchill, marking a turning point in Churchill's standing with the public.

According to BIPO, confidence in the Government was much more volatile than faith in Churchill (Figure 48) and dissatisfaction reached a peak during the turbulent months of early 1942.¹⁹⁶ Although there is some correlation with morale and the military situation, it was not quite so strong as the results for the Churchill questionnaires. This reflects the fact that whereas Churchill was seen to be the embodiment of military struggle, the Government was also seen to be related to other concerns, the obvious one being the domestic situation. Certain key characters of the Government stood out, notably Bevin, whose direction of labour and conscription of women to the war effort “increased confidence in the Government”¹⁹⁷, and also Eden, and Beaverbrook.

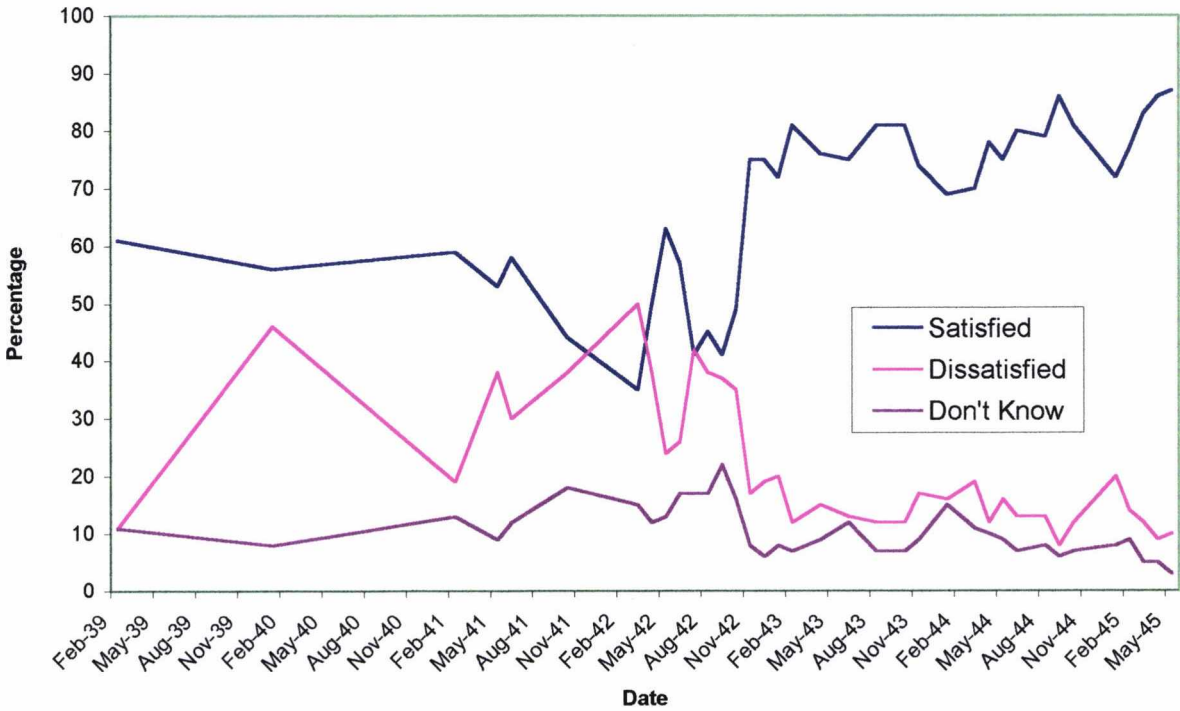


Figure 48 Satisfaction with the Government's conduct of the war according to BIPO

¹⁹⁶ Appendix 4, Table 24.

¹⁹⁷ Home Intelligence Weekly Report 1st-8th December 1941, INF1/292.

Beaverbrook's appeals for aluminium in the summer of 1940, although perhaps technically ill-advised, caught the public imagination and secured his image as "the little man who gets things done".¹⁹⁸ Cripps, too, played a relatively short but significant role in the Cabinet, but on the whole the Government was considered as a cohesive unit to be praised and castigated accordingly. Churchill was largely exempt from inclusion in this at first precisely because of his connection with the military aspect of the war, but as the demands of the war effort increasingly encroached upon the Home Front through, for example, burdens placed on the worker or simply because of the prolonged shortages for the housewife, Churchill slowly came to be included in general criticism of the Government. Once it was realised that his leadership would not bring an early victory, he could no longer offer any hope of escape from the grind of daily life. His pronouncements of the ever-increasing expected duration of the war reinforced this and his steadfast refusal to discuss the post-war world also began to damage his reputation.

In an attempt to deflect some of the criticism that the Government was reluctant to embrace Beveridge's proposals, Churchill broadcast on the Government's plans for reconstruction at the end of March, nearly four months after the Report was originally published.¹⁹⁹ In it, he did not mention Beveridge at all but instead he outlined his – and the Government's – commitment to a four years' plan that could be implemented once the war was over and which would provide the foundation of future economic and social schemes. In the broadcast, he addressed the issues of agriculture, health, education and taxation and admitted that there must be reforms and improvements in all of these areas. But just as other groups had not furnished any details, Churchill also failed to do so. His principle concern lay with winning the war, firstly against Germany and then against Japan, and nothing, he stressed, "must lure us from it". He was equally keen to excuse the Government's reluctance to commit itself to reconstruction, saying that:

We must beware of attempts to over-persuade or even coerce His Majesty's Government to bind themselves or their unknown successors in conditions which no-one can foresee and which may be years ahead, to impose great new expenditure on the state without any relation to the circumstances which might prevail at that time, and to make them pledge themselves to particular schemes without relation to other extremely important aspects of our post-war needs.

¹⁹⁸ MO FR 1064, *The Big Debate*, 29th January 1942.

¹⁹⁹ "A Four Years' Plan", broadcast, 21st March 1943, *Onwards to Victory*, pp. 33-45. See Appendix 2 for the text of the speech.

Such a statement perhaps revealed great caution and wisdom, but it also showed to what extent Churchill was out of touch with the public mood. People's reactions to the broadcast were varied, ranging from those who thought it the 'greatest yet' to disappointment that he barely touched on the war. Among those who liked the speech, people admired "the fresh and stirring tones of Mr. Churchill's delivery and his quiet confidence" and people thought he was right in giving a "sense of proportion to all post-war planning schemes".²⁰⁰ His warning that "we still have to win the war first" was applauded as necessary to "bring the wishful thinkers down to earth".²⁰¹ They were also encouraged that "the Prime Minister is taking such an interest in home matters" and it was pointed out that it was the first speech that he had devoted to the subject. However, this praise was not universal and there were many "less intelligent people" who turned on their radio sets "expecting to hear a war review on a familiar pattern. At first, they were disappointed at the unfamiliar theme, then at times the 'speech got quite beyond them'".²⁰² There was particular regret at the lack of reference to a second front for which many people had been hoping for so long, but a few people were said to be "so disappointed that he had nothing new to say about the war" that they "switched off the radio half way through the speech".²⁰³ Such reactions revealed how, by this date, Churchill's broadcasts had become a stereotype and that for some at least, any deviation from the usual litany of battlefronts, successes and failures only confused, disappointed and irritated. In addition to the subject being unfamiliar, the style of the speech was also different, "quieter and less rhetorical", which was appreciated by many. For while his usual style was "so very highly appreciated during the Battle of Britain", by 1943 it had become a "more and more frequent source of criticism and irritation".²⁰⁴ But besides those who appreciated the new style, there was also a large number of people who disliked it, thinking that it betrayed his recent illness or else they were disconcerted by the unfamiliar. It seemed that some people were comforted by what they knew and were reassured by his optimistic prognoses of the war; any deviation from this regular pattern upset their sense of security.

Churchill's previous broadcast on 29th November had dealt exclusively with the military situation, concentrating on the victories in North Africa, which ought to have satisfied those who were disappointed by Churchill's departure from the norm the

²⁰⁰ Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 16th-23rd March 1943, INF1/292.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ MO FR 1660, *Mass-Observation Bulletin*, April 1943.

following March.²⁰⁵ In spite of this, “praise was not quite so eulogistic as usual” as there was some regret that he made no mention of post-war planning.²⁰⁶ It seems that Churchill could not win. The Four Years’ Plan broadcast in March had attempted to rectify the situation and yet there was still criticism, somewhat justified, that he “failed to give more precise indications of the Government’s intentions”.²⁰⁷ Some described the speech as “a further instalment of the ‘land fit for heroes’ stuff” while ‘Beveridge fans’ felt that the plan had been killed, lamenting “we’ve got as much of it as we shall ever get”.²⁰⁸

Indicating the wide interest in Churchill’s opinions on post-war planning, over three-quarters of the people interviewed in a London street had heard or read the speech, an unusually high number.²⁰⁹ While HI had found that some were disappointed that he had not elaborated on the plans themselves, MO found no criticism of his reasoning that the war must be won before the plan was implemented.²¹⁰ On the whole it seems, the speech was well-received and it greatly enhanced Churchill’s personal popularity, for whereas before he was thought not to be “new-order minded enough”, the speech proved that “the Prime Minister had his eyes on post-war matters as well as the war”.²¹¹ It persuaded half of the people that he was in fact in favour of Beveridge, although some of these were not very sure, and the speech failed to convince a fifth of the population.²¹² Nevertheless, “Mr. Churchill’s stock [was] said to be higher than ever”.²¹³

The reaction to the broadcast and Churchill’s renewed popularity revealed how deeply the public were affected by the promise of reconstruction. Feelings were violently in favour of massive reform, even if the details were overlooked and the exact goals were disputed. The favourable military situation and the total defeat of the Germans in North Africa in May 1943 encouraged the feeling that “we are on the road to victory and the end is in sight” which increased people’s interest in the post-war even further.²¹⁴ “The majority consider that ‘the time is now ripe for far-reaching plans to be made’ ” continued HI, “and the failure of the Government to produce one simple positive large

²⁰⁵ “Victory as a Spur” broadcast, 29th November 1942, *The End of the Beginning*, pp. 236-243.

²⁰⁶ Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 1st-8th December 1942, INF1/292.

²⁰⁷ Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 16th-23rd March 1943, INF1/292.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ MO FR 1660, *Mass-Observation Bulletin*, April 1943.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ MO FR 1375, *Second Report on Sir Stafford Cripps*, 6th August 1942 and Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 23rd-30th March 1943, INF1/292.

²¹² MO FRs 1673, *Social Security and Parliament*, 5th May 1943 and 1660, *Mass-Observation Bulletin*, April 1943.

²¹³ Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 23rd-30th March 1943, INF1/292.

²¹⁴ Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 13th-20th July 1943, INF1/292.

scale plan for any single post-war problem is thought to be partly responsible for the widespread pessimism on this subject". The magic of Churchill's Four Years' Plan broadcast also began to fade when it failed to be followed up by tangible evidence of his commitment to planning and reconstruction. As the year wore on, interest in the post-war grew yet anxiety and pessimism became even more widespread.²¹⁵ Towards the end of the year and under great pressure from those around him, Churchill spoke again on reconstruction that "no airy visions, no party doctrines, no party prejudices, no political appetites, no vested interests, must stand in the way of the simple duty of providing beforehand for food, work and homes."²¹⁶ But where people before had generally appreciated his promises, this time his speech had "no appreciably lasting effect" in alleviating post-war worries and neither had Churchill's concession to instituting a new Ministry of Reconstruction under the popular Lord Woolton.²¹⁷ Churchill had evidently lost his touch.

His next broadcast, a full year after the Four Years' Plan broadcast, returned to the theme of Government planning.²¹⁸ In addition to summarising the progress made on the military fronts, he reiterated the six areas which would require special consideration, among them were employment, health and education. He outlined the advances the Government had already made in these areas, with the Bill for Butler's Education Act, the plan for the National Health Service and the forthcoming plan on social insurance, which, he confessed, he had thought "would be put off to the end of the war". In spite of his reassurances that these and other schemes showed the Government's commitment to introduce new measures, he referred to his favourite theme of 'win first'. Unequivocally he said:

Let me first of all lay down this absolute rule. Nothing can or must be done in housing or rehousing which, by weakening or clogging the war effort, prolongs the war. Neither labour nor material can be diverted in a way which hampers the vast operations which are in progress or impending.

²¹⁵ Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 30th November - 7th December 1943, INF1/292.

²¹⁶ "No Time to Relax" Mansion House, 9th November 1943, Churchill, *Onwards to Victory*, p. 267.

²¹⁷ Woolton had previously served as Minister of Food and had gained a popular following through his efficient and fair system of rationing and his regular broadcasts. In May 1942 he polled 79% who were satisfied with his ministership, rivalling Churchill's popularity in his job. Hadley Cantril, *Public Opinion 1939-1946* (Princeton University Press, 1951).

²¹⁸ "The Hour of our Greatest Effort is Approaching" broadcast, 26th March 1944, Churchill, *The Dawn of Liberation*, p. 38-49.

Unsurprisingly, the speech found little popularity amongst the public. “Disappointment continues to be reported as the predominating reaction”, HI found the week after the broadcast and despite his disclaimer that he was not “looking for votes or trying to glorify this party or that”, there was some objection on the grounds that “it sounded like an election speech”.²¹⁹ It seemed people wanted Churchill’s commitment to a plan for the post-war without him being connected with a political party in any way.

Expectations that the country would return to normal party politics once the war was over had long been anticipated – and dreaded by some. But in a characteristic confusion in the public mind, during the early days of his premiership it was expected that Churchill would lead the country with some form of socialist Government under him.²²⁰ Support for him as post-war leader, however, soon began to fade. In June 1941, opinion was evenly divided between those who wanted him to remain as Prime Minister after the war and those who did not. But two and a half years later the proportion against his post-war premiership had risen to 62 per cent, indicating people’s malaise with Churchill in the last year or so of the war.²²¹

At this time, the size of the ‘don’t know’ category, which was already unusually small for a political question, began to diminish which also showed how opinions were being firmly polarised against him. Even Churchill himself had admitted several years earlier that those who “can win a war well can rarely make a good peace and those who could make a good peace would never have won the war”.²²² The public too seemed to understand this and by 1944 there came a realisation that Churchill was no longer the man he used to be. Those who knew Churchill best at this time thought “he looked old, tired and very depressed” and like “a very old man. His brilliance was still visible, but now his peaks were fewer and shorter, and his slumps deeper and longer.”²²³ The public too sensed his exhaustion in the increasingly rare broadcasts he made. In his broadcast in March 1944, people seemed to think it was that of a “worn and petulant old man”²²⁴ and although he still showed his usual vigour during his talks with world leaders, on

²¹⁹ Home Intelligence Weekly Reports 28th March – 4th April 1944 and 21st-28th March 1944, INF1/292.

²²⁰ Nicolson diary, 18th July 1940, p. 103 and Home Intelligence Weekly Report 9th-15th January 1941, INF1/292.

²²¹ MO FRs 749, *Further Notes on Hore-Belisha and Churchill*, 23rd June 1941 and 2024 *News Quota Questionnaire*, 8th February 1944, Appendix 4, Table 25.

²²² Winston Churchill, *My Early Life*, (Odhams, 1947).

²²³ John Colville, *Fringes of Power*, (Hodder and Staughton, 1985) 18th February 1944, p. 474 (hereafter Colville diary) and Air Chief Marshall Tedders’ opinion recorded in Kenneth Young (ed.) *The Diaries of Rupert Lockhart, II 1939-1965* (Macmillan, 1980) 6th May 1944, p. 307. (Hereafter Bruce-Lockhart diary).

²²⁴ Nicolson diary 27th March 1944, p. 356.

account of his several illnesses people worried about his health during his journeys abroad.²²⁵ Above anything else, Churchill was considered too old and too tired to lead the country beyond victory.

Doubts about the efficacy of Churchill's leadership were also beginning to be complemented by other criticisms. Although the press had long been aware of Churchill's rather dictatorial character, it was not until 1944 that this became a consistent part of public opinion.²²⁶ By this date, it seemed, people no longer thought the country needed such a strong leader that had been demanded in 1940, for now far more issues were in want of attention than simply the survival of the country. The war had been going so well that rather than the question being if Britain would win and under what circumstances peace would be negotiated, the question now being asked was when victory would come and what conditions it might bring. The 'White Paper Trail' of 1944 only highlighted this criticism of Churchill even further. An amendment to the Education Bill in March, for example, which called for equal pay for women teachers, resulted in the first defeat of the Government in the war, with 117 votes against and 116 for. At first, this caused only "moderate interest" among the public, but Churchill's insistence that the matter be turned into a vote of confidence the following day "made the whole question the main topic of the week for many people, and the subject of heated discussion".²²⁷ The discussion centred on whether or not the vote of confidence should have been called at all and that Parliament was no longer allowed to debate the motions put before it. "It is suggested", continued HI, "Parliament will soon be like the Reichstag and people ask why bother to discuss bills if criticism is stifled."

The dictatorial side of Churchill's character was also proven by his interference at the Brighton and Hove by-election in February 1944 and it similarly raised ire that he should involve himself in party politics.²²⁸ The by-election was already a hotly disputed seat, for the Government candidate, William Teeling, was an unpopular choice amongst local Conservatives who felt that he had been imposed upon them by Conservative Central Office.²²⁹ There was also a charge that the election had been deliberately rushed so that there would be no opposition. However, with just seven and a half minutes

²²⁵ For example, Home Intelligence Weekly Report 10th-17th October 1944, INF1/292.

²²⁶ Churchill's autocratic leadership came under scrutiny during the censure of the first half of 1942, for example.

²²⁷ Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 28th March - 4th April 1944, INF1/292.

²²⁸ Bruce-Lockhart diary, 13th February 1944, p. 277.

²²⁹ It is highly likely that Teeling was implanted by the Central Office. He had nursed ambitions to become an MP for some time, having written to Churchill asking if he could oust the Member for Bury so that he might take his place. Teeling to Churchill, 8th October 1940, CHAR2/403.

before the deadline, B. Dutton-Briant handed in his forms to stand as an independent candidate.²³⁰ Churchill sent his customary letter of support to Teeling as the Government candidate, but in unusually harsh terms described Dutton-Briant's opposition and his invocation of Churchill's name in his campaign as an "attempt to swindle" the electorate. A barrister wrote in the local newspaper that his words were "libellous in the written word and slanderous in the spoken".²³¹ Dutton-Briant publicly declared his disbelief that Churchill would not have written anything so malicious, yet Churchill returned a second letter insisting that they were in fact his words which were "not chosen lightly or impatiently by me". Churchill's involvement generated national interest – and also national censure. All regions of HI's network reported strong criticism of him, calling his intervention "unwise", "stupid", "ill-advised", "unfortunate", "unwarranted" and his words "unnecessarily strong".²³² It was thought in the North Midlands region that " 'it did not enhance his reputation' and 'will tend to lower the high esteem in which he is held' ". In Wales it resulted in a lowering of his prestige and in Scotland the result of the election, with 45 per cent of the vote going to Dutton-Briant, was taken as "a warning to him and to the Government that people resented dictation". Most tellingly, however, there was felt to be "a great difference between the position of the Prime Minister as War Leader and as that of Leader of a Political Party" and revealingly, it was suggested that " 'as a national and international icon, Mr. Churchill should not be subject to the misunderstandings and indiscretions which are so hard to avoid in the political arena' and that the public would, therefore, prefer him to keep himself out of party politics".²³³

The rise of party politics was, however, inevitable given the divisiveness of the issues under discussion in the latter stages of the war. The Town and Country Planning Bill, which called for the compulsory purchase of land at pre-war prices, was one such piece of legislation that split the coalition.²³⁴ The final draft that was passed was written only to mollify all shades of opinion and in doing so pleased no-one.²³⁵ It brought with it the re-emergence of party politics and people wondered "how much longer the coalition will stand the strain".²³⁶ Churchill's announcement at the end of the session in October

²³⁰ MO FR 2020, *Brighton and Hove*, 11th February 1944.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 10th February 1944, INF1/282 and INF1/292.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ Attlee used the same grounds to reject Churchill's suggestion that the coalition continue until the end of the war with Japan. McCallum and Readman, *The British General Election of 1945*, p. 14.

²³⁵ See Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front*, p. 377.

²³⁶ Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 17th-24th October 1944, INF1/292.

1944, that there would be no further prolongation of Parliament, also heralded the General Election and the return to party politics into the political arena.²³⁷

The public's opinion on the party political truce had been fairly consistent throughout the war with approximately half agreeing with it, but as the demands for reconstruction and planning grew, support began to diminish. By the end of 1943, MO found that such support was only "generally lukewarm" and the opinion that Parliament required proper opposition to stimulate debate began to take precedence.²³⁸ BIPO also found declining support for the coalition, with 41 per cent agreeing with it in November 1943, but which fell to 35 per cent by the following October.²³⁹ By this date, there was a growing realisation that the continuation of the coalition was impeding the implementation of Beveridge's proposals. "The 'win the war first' attitude seems almost entirely to have disappeared", wrote HI as people's impatience took hold at the failure to undertake social reforms.²⁴⁰ There was also widespread disappointment that there would be another winter under war-time conditions, for the D-Day landings had generated the hope that the war would be over by Christmas, but the slow progress on the continent soon proved this to be an empty hope which again stalled the advent of the New Jerusalem. Churchill's leadership was inescapably held to blame for this, for as the popular and media image held, he was single-handedly responsible for war policy. Just as in July 1942 with Tobruk, people's disappointment manifested itself in criticism of Churchill.

The 1945 General Election

This declining support for Churchill and the re-emergence of party politics towards the end of 1944 made many people welcome the prospect of an election. Once victory in Europe had been secured, after some debate, the date for the election was fixed for 5th July and the parties launched their various campaigns without delay.²⁴¹ For Labour, this

²³⁷ *Hansard*, 31st October 1944, Vol. 401 col. 662.

²³⁸ MO FRs 1962, *Feelings about the Political Truce*, November 1943, 1989 *Directive and Bulletin*, December 1943 and 1267, *Political Truce*, 18th May 1942.

²³⁹ BIPO poll, November 1943 in Cantril, *Public Opinion 1935-1946*, p. 277. BIPO poll October 1944 in *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Winter 1944, p. 583.

²⁴⁰ Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 3rd-10th October 1944, INF1/292.

²⁴¹ The campaigns of the Liberal and other minority parties have not been included here as the election was largely fought between Conservative and Labour, but see McCallum and Readman, *The British General Election of 1945*, pp. 61-68 and 107-110.

built on the legacy of social reform and change that had developed especially intensively over the previous two years since the publication of the Beveridge Report. Its manifesto, *Let Us Face the Future*, was a forward looking document that stressed domestic affairs, especially housing and employment, both of which were held by the public as being the most important issues faced by the country.²⁴² By contrast, the Conservatives' manifesto, *Mr. Churchill's Declaration of Policy to the Electors*, dealt firstly with foreign affairs, written as it was by Churchill who was preoccupied with the changing world and the implications of the Soviet contribution to the war effort. Mention of social reform took third place after diplomacy and defence and followed the rather vague outline of the Four Years' Plan that had first been mentioned in March 1943. Housing was addressed in a promise to build 220,000 new homes within two years, rather fewer than Labour's assurance of four to five million. The Conservative manifesto demonstrated one of the multitude of ways in which the party was out of touch with the public's interests. Diplomacy had never been a subject of concern for the great majority of the public and this was certainly not the moment to attempt to instil an interest. Bernard Newman, touring Britain in 1944, had commented that "we are indeed parochial in our outlook: selfish is probably a better word", suggesting that the policies that would have an immediate and ameliorating impact on people's lives would prove the most popular, which indeed they did.²⁴³ But the Conservatives not only failed to understand this fundamental part of the public's make-up, but also popular attitudes to Churchill himself.

The Conservative Party's campaign, masterminded by Lord Beaverbrook and Brendan Bracken, was very much centred on the figure of Churchill and the election could almost be described as a popularity contest between him and Labour's social policy. Even the eternally popular Eden was eclipsed in the campaign, although, to be fair, he was ill for most of the campaign with a duodenal ulcer.²⁴⁴ As early as 1942 Churchill had been described as "the greatest asset the Conservative Party has" and it was thought, "we had best exploit him".²⁴⁵ This the Conservatives did without reservation and his image adorned poster sites and electoral literature. Often this would

²⁴² In a BIPO poll, 41 per cent of people named housing as the issue most likely to be discussed during the campaigns, McCallum and Readman, *The British Election of 1945*, p. 150. Earlier in March 59 per cent had said that it was the most important problem facing the Government. Henry Pelling *Churchill*, (Macmillan 1974) p. 561. For a fuller exposition of the Labour Manifesto see Ian Taylor, "Labour and the Impact of War, 1939-1945" in Nick Tiratsoo (ed.) *The Attlee Years*, (Pinter, 1991) pp. 7-28, especially pp. 21-5.

²⁴³ Bernard Newman, *British Journey*, p. 29 quoted in Fielding et al, *England Arise!* p. 41.

²⁴⁴ On the orders of his doctor, Lord Moran, he was to do no work for four weeks except one broadcast. Anthony Eden, *Memoirs: The Reckoning*, (Cassell, 1965) p. 540.

²⁴⁵ R.A. Butler quoted in Channon diary, 20th January 1942, p. 317.

show him smiling confidently in a pose which had become so familiar over the course of the war together with the caption “Help him finish the job” (Figure 49). This suggested that he would single-handedly lead the country but it also underplayed his association with the Conservatives, carrying the slogan “Vote National” (Figure 50).²⁴⁶ However, the reminder of a continuing war, which was expected to last another eighteen months, only served to alienate those who awaited the implementation of new legislation as the on-going war indicated further delay. It was a further *faux pas* for the Conservatives for few people had ever been able to cultivate a deep interest in the war in the Far East on account of its distance and the sparsity of readily available information.²⁴⁷ But the emphasis on the war also reinforced Churchill’s image as war leader. In his view, Britain was still a nation at war and who better was there to lead it than the hero of the previous five years, but this too was a fundamental mistake. War weariness and a desire to resume normality as quickly as possible signalled people’s view that the country was now



Figure 49 Conservative General Election poster

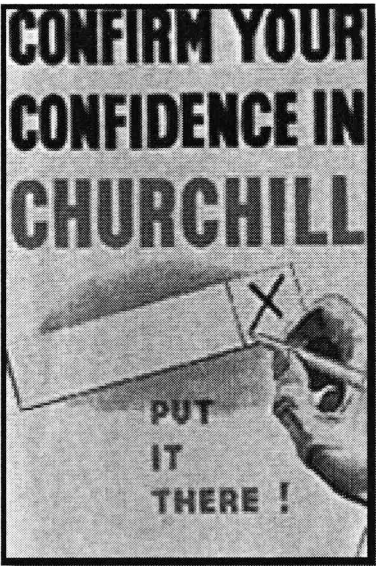


Figure 50 Conservative General Election poster

²⁴⁶ It was Churchill’s hope to continue the spirit of the coalition into the post-war with a national rather than party Government.

²⁴⁷ See Gill Sinclair “The Cultivation of Public Opinion and the Far Eastern War, 1941-1945”, MA dissertation, University of Kent, 1996.

entering a well-deserved period of peace; reminders of war and the accompanying struggle and effort and sacrifice were unwelcome to almost everyone. Linking Churchill with war in this way merely served to emphasise Churchill's unsuitability for the task of rebuilding Britain.

In addition to the posters of Churchill, the Conservative campaign gave him wide publicity in the broadcasts that were allotted to each party in the run up to the election. Of the ten that were assigned to the Conservatives, Churchill made four, beginning with his infamous Gestapo speech on 4th June.²⁴⁸ This broadcast was an open and violent attack on socialism and designed to frighten people into voting Conservative:

No Socialist Government conducting the entire life and industry of the country could afford to allow free, sharp or violently worded expressions of public discontent. They would have to fall back on some form of Gestapo, no doubt very humanely directed in the first instance. And this would nip opinion in the bud; it would stop criticism as it reared its head...My friends I must tell you that a Socialist policy is abhorrent to British ideas of freedom...there can be no doubt that Socialism is inseparably interwoven with Totalitarianism and the abject worship of the State.

Before the broadcast Churchill had shown it to his wife who begged him "to delete the odious and insidious reference to the Gestapo. But he would not heed her".²⁴⁹ And so with the reference intact and the vitriolic tone replete the broadcast went ahead, much to Churchill's chagrin.²⁵⁰ With few exceptions, the speech was very badly received indeed.²⁵¹ Over three-quarters of the people in one constituency heard the speech and seven in ten disapproved of it.²⁵² "It would be difficult to exaggerate the disappointment and general distress aroused by this speech", wrote MO, and a number of people felt that Churchill "had made himself ridiculous".²⁵³ But people were also aggrieved at "his overnight change from National leader to Party leader".²⁵⁴ They were "angry that he dare speak

²⁴⁸ "Vote National, Not Party", broadcast, 4th June 1945, Churchill (edited by Charles Eade), *Victory* (Cassell, 1946) pp. 186-192. See Appendix 2 for text of the speech.

²⁴⁹ Mary Soames, *Clementine Churchill*, (Cassell, 1979), p. 382.

²⁵⁰ It was widely supposed that Beaverbrook had instigated the speech, Attlee commenting the next day in his broadcast "it was the voice of Churchill we heard, but the mind of Lord Beaverbrook". John Colville, however, denied this. Colville diary, p. 606.

²⁵¹ Those who liked the speech included David Margesson, (Margesson to Churchill, 5th June 1945, Churchill papers 23/16, Churchill College, Cambridge, hereafter CHUR) and Henry Channon (Channon diary, 5th June 1945, p. 408).

²⁵² MO FR 2282, *Post-Mortem on the General Election*, September 1945.

²⁵³ MO FR 2270A, *The General Election*, July 1945.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.* This distinction between national and party leader was also brought out by Attlee in his broadcast reply to Churchill the following evening.

such lying sentiments into the microphone, resentful that he could make such allegations against his own countrymen, and glad that he has shown up Tory tactics and that by one speech of abuse he shows that he has no real tactics”.²⁵⁵ Churchill’s daughter, Sarah, wrote to him with the suggestion that in his next broadcast he should expand more fully on the Four Years’ Plan, for many people had forgotten the details, it having been eclipsed by Beveridge. She also advised him to talk of housing, “surely the greatest domestic issue in about 18 months”.²⁵⁶ This he did, but the speech was once again lacklustre. Vita Sackville-West, an ardent supporter of Churchill, was “dreadfully distressed by the badness of his broadcast Election Speeches...They are confused, and woolly, unconstructive and so wordy that it is impossible to pick out any concrete impressions from them”.²⁵⁷ Even Churchill admitted by the time of the last broadcast, “I am worried about this damned election. I’ve no message for them now”.²⁵⁸

In spite of Churchill’s weariness, on the same day he made the remark he stopped at three towns making speeches on his way to Chequers and three days later began a tour of the country. Travelling to over twenty towns in three days on his way to Scotland where he made a further six speeches, Churchill encountered “enormous crowds on the roads and in the streets and the progress got later and later”.²⁵⁹ In Coventry on 25th June, the crowd numbered 20,000 and waited patiently, giving him a loud ovation when he finally arrived two hours late. He followed up the tour of the northern regions with a similar trip around London on 2nd July, stopping at eighteen points on the way. His tour was largely presented in the media as one of great triumph. The *Paramount* newsreel, which had been the most reticent newsreel in showing support for Churchill during the war, was now the most effusive in its praise:

The country was seeing at close quarters the man who led it to victory. Millions of people turned out to cheer their vociferous thanks...All Birmingham seemed to have turned up to cheer him. No Premier since Gladstone was ever more revered by the populace. With the immense prestige of his victory record Churchill now seeks to lead Britain in peace.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Sarah Churchill to Churchill, 5th June 1945, CHUR1/387.

²⁵⁷ Vita Sackville-West to Harold Nicolson in Nicolson diary, 22nd June 1945, p. 472.

²⁵⁸ Lord Moran, *Churchill: The Struggle for Survival* (Heron Books, 1966) 22nd June 1945, p. 254

²⁵⁹ Private office diary, 25th June 1945, Thompson papers quoted in Martin Gilbert, *Winston Spencer Churchill*, Vol. VIII, p. 50.

²⁶⁰ *Paramount News, Churchill Goes Electioneering*, 2nd July 1945.

There truly was no doubt about the enthusiasm of the crowd in the shots captured. The cameraman's dope sheet for the *Gaumont* newsreel noted that "some shots maybe unsteady owing to crowds closing in on camera" suggesting people's excitability.²⁶¹ The zeal followed on from Churchill's apotheosis following victory in Europe when crowds packed the squares and avenues of London to see him and hear him speak.²⁶² It was on account of such a tremendous reception throughout the country that almost everyone thought electoral victory would belong to Churchill. Attlee, among others, suspected that Churchill called an early election to take advantage of the wave of gratitude that swept the country²⁶³ and Churchill also recognised his own indispensability, saying to Bevin that the Conservatives knew "they can't win without me".²⁶⁴ Sensing Churchill's appeal to the public, Woolton told Beaverbrook that for the Conservative campaign, "The mixture we want is Churchill the war-winner, Churchill the bulldog breed in international conferences, and Churchill the leader of Government with a programme of social reform".²⁶⁵ This left few corners unchecked in the Conservatives' campaign in relation to Churchill and was noted by Vicky in his cartoon showing Churchill campaigning over the whole country (Figure 51). But the Conservative campaign overlooked one vital fact: that Churchill's overall popularity had been in decline for some time.

As early as 1944 Harold Nicolson had found "Churchill is a bastard" written on the wall of Blackheath station. "We find it everywhere these days" explained the Group Captain he was with.²⁶⁶ Nicolson, being the ever perceptive politician, realised that "Churchill is now an electoral liability rather than an asset".²⁶⁷ Throughout Churchill's tour in 1945, the cheers of the crowds had been accompanied by jeering and the people were there to cheer their war leader, not necessarily their future Prime

²⁶¹ *Gaumont British News*, dope sheet of footage of Churchill in Leamington Spa, 25th June 1945, bufvc.com.

²⁶² The myth of the war with Churchill as its symbol had already been established by 1945 and the VE celebrations and their subsequent recollection served to reinforce this. No single work on this has been undertaken but see MO FR 2263, *Victory in Europe*, June 1945 for a sense of the crowds' mood in London on 8th May.

²⁶³ Clement Attlee, *As It Happened*, (Heinemann, 1954) p. 135.

²⁶⁴ Hugh Dalton *Fateful Years: Memoirs 1931-1945* (Muller, 1955) 11th May 1945, p. 859.

²⁶⁵ Woolton to Beaverbrook, 31st May 1945, Beaverbrook archive quoted in Timothy Benson, *Low and Beaverbrook: The Case of a Cartoonist's Autonomy*. PhD thesis, University of Kent, 1998.

²⁶⁶ Nicolson diary, 7th February 1944, p. 347.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

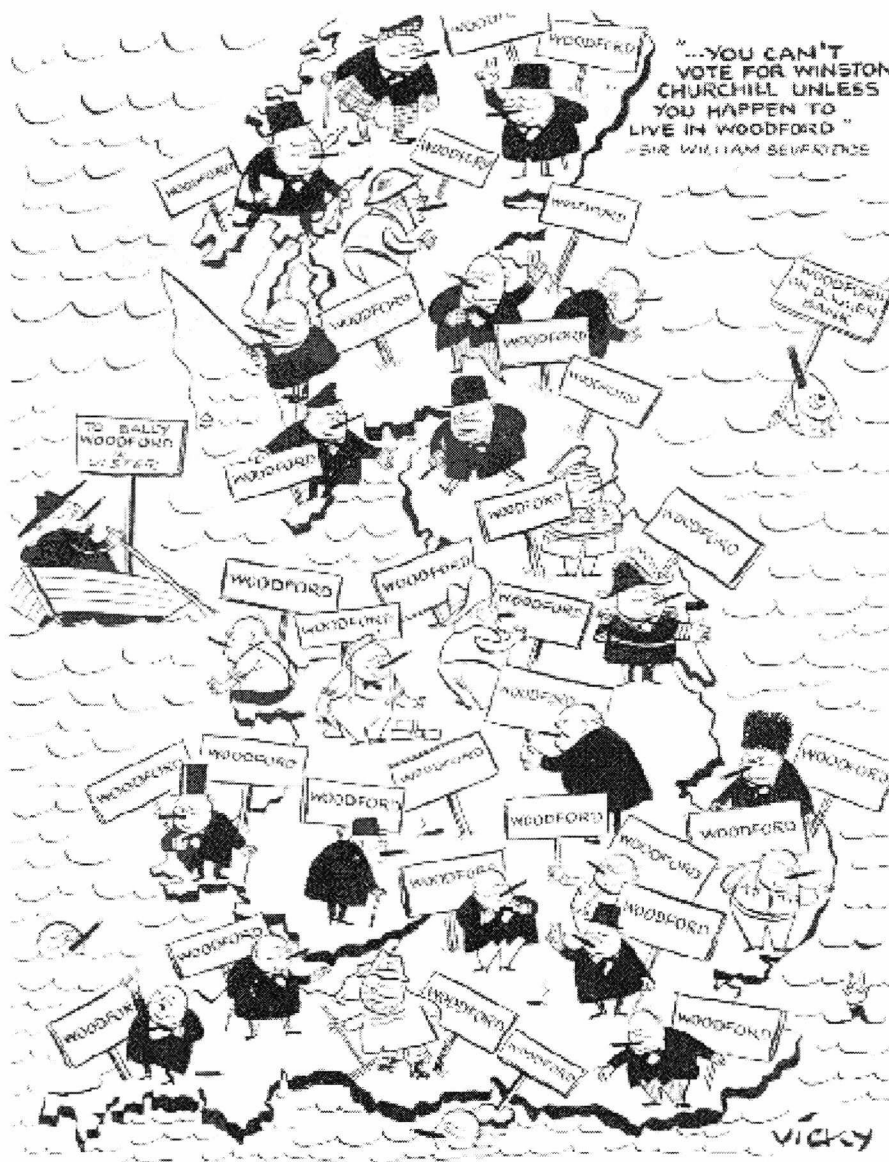


Figure 51 *News Chronicle* 30th May 1945

Minister. In Fulham, people were overheard saying, “I thought I’d come and give him a cheer” and “whether his politics are yours or not you’ve got to hand it to him” which hardly portended their political support.²⁶⁸ One of the other concerns about Churchill’s suitability to continue as Prime minister was also raised with someone commenting, “Don’t he look bad (sic)”.²⁶⁹ Besides concern for his health there was also distaste at the Conservatives’ unembarrassed exploitation of Churchill: “I’m sorry for Churchill. They’re killing the old chap. He’s the Tory dog that’s got to be on show – they’re killing

²⁶⁸ MO FR 2267, *Election Observations, Fulham*, July 1945.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

him between themselves.”²⁷⁰ Among the praise for his past record and concerns about his physical condition was also genuine hostility. In Coventry, a man pulled down the loudspeakers so that Churchill might not be heard and at Walthamstow he was prevented from making his speech “because the heckling and booing were so intense” which was recorded on the *Gaumont* newsreel.²⁷¹ On the final day of the campaign, this animosity expressed itself in a violent and potentially injurious form when someone threw a squib at him in Tooting Bec, narrowly missing his eyes.

What Churchill’s tour showed was the struggle in the minds of the people to reconcile their respect for him against their hopes for the future. There was gratitude for his leadership through 1940, which by 1945 had already become immortalised, and recognition of his incomparable leadership qualities. But vying with this was his incongruous partisanship that had always generated censure whenever it had appeared during the war, and the accompanying doubt about his commitment to reform. As MO wrote of his tour, there was “an overwhelming admiration and hero worship, struggling against a prosaic disagreement with his present views and behaviour”.²⁷² Thus among the crowds that awaited him throughout the country there were anti-Churchill conversations but as soon as he appeared there were loud cheers. However, the *Manchester Guardian* commented:

It would be a brave man indeed who would profess to find in the happy faces a reliable index to their political opinions. Had they possessed tails they would have wagged them all together, and still concealed from Mr. Churchill and everybody else the secret of their vote.²⁷³

In the final analysis, admiration for Churchill was conquered by the desire for reform and Labour received 47 per cent of the vote. Labour was almost universally seen to be the party which showed the greatest commitment to rebuilding Britain on new lines. Much of their vote stemmed from the working-class who had the most to gain by the measures promised by Labour²⁷⁴ and whose memories of the hardships under the

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Mary Soames, *Clementine Churchill*, p. 383. *Gaumont British News, Mr. Churchill in Walthamstow*, 3rd July 1945. See also Appendix 8 for Churchill’s speech at Walthamstow which indicates the difficulties he had in being heard.

²⁷² MO FR 2270A, *The General Election*, July 1945.

²⁷³ *Manchester Guardian*, 27th June 1945.

²⁷⁴ The percentage of votes cast by region as opposed to seats gained, is an indicator of the class-bound political structure of Britain and lends weight to the otherwise unconvincing argument of socialisation put forward by Mark Franklin and Matthew Ladner, “The Undoing of Winston Churchill: Mobilisation and Conversion in the 1945 Realignment of British Voters” *British Journal*

Conservatives during the interwar years were the longest.²⁷⁵ Indeed, 51 per cent of those who voted Labour claimed to have done so because the party was “good for the working class”.²⁷⁶ This the Conservatives could never have laid claim to, and equally they had lost the initiative in the debate for reconstruction. Churchill was undoubtedly largely to blame for this, having been preoccupied with the war and persistently arguing for the postponement of new legislation until victory could be secured. The public’s obsession with change and improvements, in whatever form they might appear, was testimony to the imprudence of neglecting this vital part of the manifesto. Anything which suggested delay, deliberation or opposition to the sacrosanct Beveridge proposals would have been damaging to the Conservative cause. The part of their campaign which reminded people that the war was not yet over would have alienated many in this respect.²⁷⁷ It was not, however, simply a question of obstruction for the Conservatives also failed to build a vision of the future for the largely unimaginative public. Beveridge had provided this in 1942 which had been seized upon and embellished by Labour, but the Conservatives offered no deftly woven alternative dream. Had they done so, the public may have had a more difficult choice between the two parties.

The Conservative’s over-reliance on Churchill also lost votes for the party in some quarters. The incongruity of the Tory party embracing him was taken up in the press, the *Manchester Guardian*, for example, wrote:

When Winston Churchill calls upon the nation’s vast reserves of affection towards him for the benefit of a reactionary party which only lately despised and rejected him, when...in short he is asking for a personal plebiscite he is straining loyalty too far.²⁷⁸

The unreserved popularity that had been his in early 1941 had gradually been tempered with reservations about his age and health and about his dictatorial tendencies. The irony of his warnings about the socialists’ inability to accept criticism in his Gestapo

of Political Science, Vol. 25, No. 4, October 1995, pp. 429-352. For the regional variations in the voting pattern, see Appendix IV in McCallum and Readman, *The British General Election of 1945*.

²⁷⁵ For arguments pertaining to the influence of the interwar years see Robert Blake, *The Conservative Party From Peel to Churchill* (Eyre and Spottiswood, 1970) and A.J.P. Taylor, *English History*. It is unlikely, however, that this was a major influence in the outcome of the election as Churchill was not associated with any of the policies of the 1930s and many of the first time voters are thought to have voted Labour which swung the election to their advantage.

²⁷⁶ Appendix 4, Table 26.

²⁷⁷ Attlee held that Beaverbrook’s campaign tactics were responsible for the Conservative defeat, especially the squalid attacks on Labour. *As It Happened*, p. 144. See also R.A. Butler quoted in Henry Pelling, *Churchill*, p. 558-9.

²⁷⁸ *Manchester Guardian* 25th June 1940.

speech was not lost when it was remembered how he had called for votes of confidence and had censored opinion throughout the war whenever there was grumbling to be heard. The impression given by the Conservative campaign that he would single-handedly lead the country did little to alleviate such fears of dictatorship. In total, 14 per cent of those who disapproved of the election campaigns said that their principal objection was to Churchill personally and a further 13 per cent disapproved of the Conservatives' general tactics of scaremongering and attacking the Labour party.²⁷⁹ His Gestapo speech also alienated some vacillating voters, not simply for his ungentlemanly conduct but also because it revealed his party affiliation.

These points, however, while helping to explain the Labour victory, do nothing to explain why a third of the electorate voted for the Conservatives in 1945. There were, of course, party stalwarts who accounted for a tenth of the Conservative vote as well as those who objected to the fundamental principles of socialism (around one quarter).²⁸⁰ But Churchill's and the party's record during the war accounted for half of the vote, proving that he was, indeed, as he had said to Bevin, indispensable to the party machine. What raised objection to him among some members of the public, notably his reputation for belligerence and despotism, was seen as an asset by others. Compared with Attlee's shy reticence, it was thought that only Churchill's ebullience could negotiate peace with the recalcitrant Japan and dispense order over the chaos that reigned in Europe. His proven track record of dealing with foreign ministers made him the only suitable candidate for this particular aspect of the premiership and the quiet revolution he proposed with his Four Years' Plan promised improvement without dislocation such as was portended by the violent upheaval of socialist reform and its programme of nationalisation. But Churchill's personality also had a great deal to do with the success of the Conservative party. Victory in Europe together with the emerging Myth of 1940 as the nation's finest hour with Churchill at the helm, inspired widespread loyalty and gratitude. Even after his injudicious Gestapo broadcast there was still to be found "a simple loyalty that transcends criticism".²⁸¹ Churchill's extensive public exposure throughout the war clearly contributed to the Conservative's choice to use him as their party centrepiece and as MO never tired of pointing out, while men considered the policies more carefully, women tended to be more susceptible to the wiles of

²⁷⁹ Appendix 4, Table 27.

²⁸⁰ It is interesting to note, from Table 27, that antagonism to socialist policies amongst Conservative voters was far higher than opposition to Tory values among left-wingers (26 per cent to 11 per cent).

²⁸¹ MO FR 2270A, *The General Election*, July 1945.

personality.²⁸² With so many men away, MO argued, some women would have had to decide for whom to vote without the benefit of their husbands' views, possibly for the first time.²⁸³

Thus, the General Election of 1945 was not fought simply on issues of policy. This was indeed the Labour party's strong point, but the weakness of the Conservatives. Where they failed to tap the public's enthusiasm for the Brave New World, however, they compensated by using Churchill's public face and manipulating public loyalty to him. This backfired in some instances where the people's desire for change, war-weariness or dissatisfaction with the hero of the hour took precedence; but for others it was a crucial part of their decision to vote Conservative. One further aspect which proved itself only after the outcome of the election was known – and which was perhaps unique among General Elections of the twentieth century – was the degree and ubiquity of affection for the principal candidate.²⁸⁴ Once it was known that Labour had secured a 212-seat majority, “there was a real feeling of sorrow about the loss of Churchill, even among the most definite anti-Conservatives.”²⁸⁵ The two faces of Churchill, the party leader and the leader of the war was captured by Low (Figure 52).

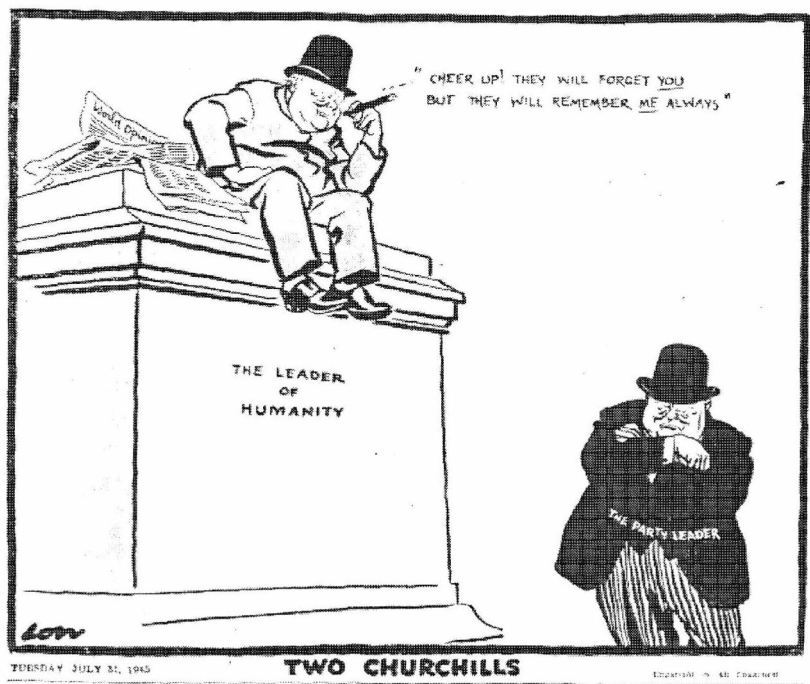


Figure 52 *Evening Standard* 31st July 1945

²⁸² See for example MO FR 2282, *Post-Mortem on Voting at the General Election*, September 1945.
²⁸³ MO FR 2261, *The New Voters and Old*, June 1945.
²⁸⁴ Appendix 4, Table 26.
²⁸⁵ MO FR 2270A, *The General Election*, July 1945.

Without wishing to advocate that Churchill was the only policy the Conservatives put forward, it was clear that he played a vital role in their success at the polling booths as well as in their defeat. If he had retired at the end of the war as he had originally intended, it would no doubt have resulted in an even more ignominious defeat for the Conservatives. For while their manifesto contained an unpopular determination to finish the job with Japan and a vague indication of a Four Years' Plan, the Conservatives' use of Churchill also rallied gratitude, loyalty and affection.

C o n c l u s i o n

Churchill was without doubt primarily a military leader. His own personal interest and indeed his experience in military affairs lay here and in 1940 he was seen as the only Member of Parliament with a sufficient degree of bullishness and determination to continue the war through the darkest days, 'alone' against the enemy. As the war progressed, however, these qualities were not sufficient on their own for a great many more issues demanded to be addressed which had direct bearing upon the daily lives of the people. As a consequence, Churchill's ability to handle domestic affairs gradually came to be the focal point on which his popularity rested. This was, however, a wide-ranging topic and encompassed everything from the effects of the duration of the war through to the prospect of post-war reform. But whereas his war leadership was largely viewed as faultless in the first year or so of his premiership, his command of the Home Front was seen to be rather weaker. It was perhaps unfair of the public to demand that he should be equally proficient in all aspects of the war, especially when people complained in early 1942 that he took too much upon himself, but this merely revealed the inconsistency of public opinion.

Churchill's role on the Home Front highlighted the complexity of public opinion, both in terms of its variety and how it has been understood historically. The votes of confidence in 1942 showed to what extent public opinion divagated from press and parliamentary opinion, for whereas parliament and the press were vitriolic in their criticism and remained unsatisfied even after the votes of confidence, the public (largely) maintained their support for Churchill and welcomed the sanction the votes appeared to afford him. It is important to note, however, that public opinion was never monolithic. While at once there were people who welcomed Churchill unreservedly, at the same time

there was a minority, albeit a small one, which consistently rejected his leadership. This unwelcoming group grew in size, culminating in the squib-throwing incident at Tooting Bec in 1945. But this determinedly hostile opinion was accompanied by more selective criticisms about individual aspects of his character and leadership. These included alarm at his dictatorial character, disappointment at his failure to secure an early victory, and most importantly, frustration at his refusal to address post-war reconstruction. Such criticisms were, however, counter-balanced by loyalty, affection and patriotism and, as the Myth of 1940 developed, gratitude for saving the country. Overall, his popularity could be seen to be in gradual decline from around the second half of 1941, although the victories in North Africa in late 1942 and spring 1943 provided a tremendous but evanescent boost to his standing. This understanding of Churchill's declining popularity revises the received perception that the lowest point came in July 1942 after the Fall of Tobruk. This latter supposition is based exclusively on opinion poll data, but taking qualitative opinion into account reveals a much more fluid attitude amongst the public who struggled to make sense of these contradictory sentiments.

The vestigial support for Churchill throughout 1942 also helped to deflect the threat to his leadership thought to be posed by Stafford Cripps. Although Cripps' popularity amongst the public in early 1942 cannot be gainsaid, it did not seriously undermine Churchill's position, at least in the mind of the public. People were comfortable with the idea of having two principal leaders, one military and one domestic, for which Churchill and Cripps were the most qualified. But Cripps' popularity also rested on other factors, namely that he brought new blood to the Government and with it a sense of energy and urgency. Neither could he be blamed for the mistakes that had been made by the Government in the preceding two years of war and equally he was not tied to any one particular political party. The parallels with Churchill in 1940 are striking. A comparison of the two reveals much about the needs of the public and indeed Churchill's reputation. By 1942, Churchill had clearly lost his man of action image since people turned to Cripps to supply the Government's energy. This change in Churchill's standing was concomitant with the realisation that victory was still far off and at the same time Churchill could no longer be excused the deficiencies of the Government.

Equally important was Churchill's perceived freedom from party ties which simultaneously added to his popularity and calumny. Although he was Conservative leader, his disinterest in the post helped to foster the image of him being a supra-political figure, one who could be followed irrespective of the individual's own political affiliation.

When Churchill's Tory roots did emerge, such as during the Brighton and Hove by-election in 1944, people were jolted into the reality that he was indeed also a politician besides a national figurehead. In displaying partisanship Churchill threatened the very unity and political accord for which people admired him. This disappointment at his partisanship finally expressed itself in the 1945 General Election when people were shocked by his tactics and the dirtiness of the political arena. For years he had been virtually untainted and because of the political truce the public had become unaccustomed to the invective that characterised election campaigns. Even where there had been by-elections all candidates were united in their support for Churchill and the common ground between them made it more difficult to conduct a dirty campaign. By 1945 this unity was lost and, for the parties at least, it was a bitter political fight which pitted one party doctrine against the other. However, for some members of the public, the issues in question were not simply party dogma. The figure of Churchill in the election added an extra dimension which inculcated celebrity, loyalty, gratitude and patriotism, factors which no-one in the Labour party could hope to embody to the same degree. This has often been mentioned in other works on the General Election, but the duality of public opinion about Churchill personally has not previously been taken into account. When this is juxtaposed with the proportion of the vote the Conservatives received, rather than the misleading number of seats won by Labour, it reveals just how divided was the nation, how torn it was in its loyalties and also how faith and retrospect dictated many people's choices on 5th July. Although it is not explored here, it may account for the famously prevalent left-wing tendencies among the forces who had not been exposed to the same degree to the constant barrage of Churchill publicity which appeared throughout the war, but which must surely have swayed some people into voting for the national hero.²⁸⁶

People's choices in the General Election were also dictated by hopes for personal gain following the privations of the war. These tended to be strongest among the working-classes who had the most to gain. By demonstrating his reluctance to endorse reform, Churchill alienated working-class support except where this was transcended by other more favourable facets of his image. On account of this conflict of interests it is difficult to identify any homogenous base of support or antagonism. Classically, for example, the working-classes would have been the most likely to object to his

²⁸⁶ See Jeremy Crang, "Politics on Parade: Army Education and the 1945 General Election" in *History*, Vol. 81, April 1996, pp. 215-227 and S.P. Mackenzie, "*Vox Populi*: British Army Newspapers in the Second World War" in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Volume 24, October 1989, pp. 655-681.

Conservative inclinations, but Home Intelligence showed that they were also the most likely to respond favourably to his speeches. It is similarly difficult to identify whether or not his leadership appealed most to men or women, although if Mass-Observation were to be believed, then the latter group would dominate.

Although it would be wrong to claim that the issue at stake in the General Election was a straight choice between Churchill and social reform, this was the crux of the campaigns of the Labour and Conservative parties and it was translated into a question of whether or not Churchill had discharged his duties to the Home Front sufficiently well. Not only did he – and his party – fail to convince people that he was reform-minded, his abandonment of visits to the British people from 1943 onwards in favour of diplomatic and military pursuits removed the common ground for interaction. This made him an ever-increasingly distant figure and this lack of contact with the public may have contributed to his own failure to see their changing mood. Given the public's own self-interest, this can only have had a damaging effect on his standing. Although people generally appreciated his efforts on other fronts, they liked to receive attention from him too. Had Churchill made more broadcasts commending the efforts of those on the Home Front and paid a few more visits to towns and cities around the country, he may have rescued his reputation from the criticisms he attracted over the course of the second half of the war. There would, of course, have been those who tired of Churchill's ubiquity but given the homogenising influence of mass-gatherings, it would have made it more difficult to express disapproval.

It would be misleading therefore to claim that Churchill abandoned the Home Front for the entirety of the war, for in the first half he involved the public by praising them in his broadcasts and visiting them in their battered homes. The second half, however, was characterised by his involvement with other matters but, rather like a small child, the public needed constant attention and approval. Churchill's failure to address this resulted in a loss of prestige which has since been forgotten by the Legend. The implications of this reach far wider than simply Churchill's position in the poll tables, for it also affected the perception of solidarity, hopes for the future and the way people voted in 1945.

C o n c l u s i o n

To claim that Winston Churchill was revered by and beloved of the British public during the Second World War is at once both accurate and misleading. There can be no doubt about the place Churchill occupies in today's national Myth of the war, in just the same way that during the war people did indeed respect his abundant qualities and unparalleled leadership. But at the same time, his standing with the public was more turbulent than the Churchill Legend would suggest. This was due to a number of reasons, not least of which was the diversity of public opinion which meant conflicting opinions could be held simultaneously. It was also due to changing expectations on the part of the public, and people's opinions of Churchill depended upon how well he fulfilled their hopes. This he did with varying degrees of success. The traditional view of Churchill's standing with the public precludes any such appraisal of the complexity of public opinion. It holds simply that Churchill was massively popular in 1940 whilst the nadir of his popularity was reached in July 1942 following the Fall of Tobruk. But this bi-polar understanding is clearly far too simplistic.

For the main part, Churchill's manifold talents meant that he appealed to the public on a variety of levels and also that whilst some aspects of his public image may have alienated certain sections of society, they appealed to others. His boyishness and sense of mischief, for example, had a mixed reception. For some, it was an irritating and childish trait which was unseemly in a world statesman, but for others it proved his humanity and made him a more accessible public figure. His tours around Britain greatly facilitated this process and enabled people to see for themselves the pluckiness of the nation's Prime Minister. For others less fortunate and unable to see him in real life, this part of his character translated well on to the newsreels. His speeches, too, appealed on a wide variety of levels. People responded particularly well to his giving of facts and figures especially where these were not revealed elsewhere. This created an impression of his honesty and trustworthiness, two essential qualities of leadership. Other factors which created a positive image were his promises of aid to Russia or else his optimism in the progress of the war. But his speeches were not, at least in the first instance, necessarily appreciated by the public for their rhetoric. The slowness with which many of the now-famous phrases from 1940 were seized upon testifies to this as does the public's delight in the baser phrases such as "guttersnipe" and "stew in their own juice". With time, however, (and a certain degree of exposure in the media), Churchillian

rhetoric developed its own reputation. As “finest hour”, “the many and the few”, and “fight on the beaches” came into common usage and their paraphrases peppered everyday language, it obscured the fact that they had not been so widely appreciated when first uttered. At the same time, it caused the more popular speeches, such as the “War of the Unknown Warriors”, to be forgotten in popular memory. The development of the legendary status of Churchill’s speeches was, thus, contiguous with the rising Myth of the British at war.

In 1940 when Britain faced a very real threat of invasion and defeat, Churchill is remembered to have provided a paradigm of national virtue so apposite and so wholesome (and also complemented by MoI propaganda) that it was seen to be the perfect expression of the mood of the people. However, the accuracy of this depends upon the veracity of the Myth. Undoubtedly, some parts of the Myth were true and some people did indeed pull together in a determined effort to win the war, but, as the current academic trend argues, it was not quite so total as has been remembered.¹ Churchill’s words in the summer of 1940 provided an image of homogeneity that was necessary to conceal the instances when people did not quite live up to the standard that was set. People’s alarm at the Fall of France in June 1940, for example, does not coincide with the image of people’s fearless stoicism, but Churchill’s exhortations of courage, together with Ministry of Information propaganda, enabled an alternative memory to be constructed. As well as defining the national character traits of determination and confidence, in his speeches Churchill also defined his own strengths which were to be crucial in his capacity as a military leader.

As it is widely held, notions of his determination and belligerence developed quickly during his tenure at the Admiralty and suited the tenor of 1940 far more than Chamberlain’s wistful hopes of a limited war.² Again, this supports the defiant tones of the Myth, that the public were eager to fight. In reality, whilst many people were ready to fight a war which would see Germany defeated, few, if indeed any, welcomed the prospect of a protracted struggle or a Pyrrhic victory. Rather than it being a manifestation of public pugnacity, Churchill’s belligerence was welcomed foremostly for its promise of an early yet also decisive victory, a factor overlooked by the Legend. This feeling manifested itself towards the end of June some six weeks into Churchill’s

¹ For example, Malcolm Smith, *Britain and 1940*, (Routledge, 2000) and Robert Mackay, *Half the Battle* (Manchester University Press, 2002). First mentioned Chapter 2, p. 46.

² Angus Calder, *The People’s War*, (Pimlico, 1999) and Clive Ponting, *Churchill*, (Sinclair-Stevenson, 1994). See Chapter 1 p. 20.

premiership when discontentment with the country's leaders ran high and public morale was at a low ebb. By this date, it had become clear that the swift victory which had been presaged by Churchill's ascendancy to the premiership was unlikely to occur and his standing amongst the British public correspondingly declined. The same was true later in the war when people thought he had failed them by offering optimistic hopes of military campaigns, especially in July 1942. That Operation Crusader had been portrayed as a means to end the war in North Africa and that it should fail so ignominiously with the loss of Tobruk was a particularly hard knock to public confidence. But it should not be taken, as the subscribers to Balfour's notion of a "record low" would hold, to be the nadir of Churchill's popularity.³ The multiplicity of public opinion meant that any such claim for undulations in Churchill's standing is far more complex.

If it is at all possible to make a claim for the highest and lowest points in Churchill's wartime reputation there is evidence to suggest that his standing was in fact rather low in the summer of 1940, in direct contrast with what is supposed by the Legend and the majority of academic writers.⁴ At this date the military situation, which proved to be a crucial factor in Churchill's standing, looked bleak and his notoriety for his belligerent leadership seemed to threaten a massively destructive waging of war. People were, therefore, understandably worried at what his premiership might bring. At this date people had little experience of Churchill's wartime leadership except the bitter memories of the Dardanelles campaign of 1915 which would hardly have inspired confidence. Neither had the Legend developed for people to take comfort from it and the speeches had yet to gain their celebrated status. In short, in 1940 Churchill proved to be little more than an alternative to Chamberlain, a fairly sure hope for a swift victory and the maker of stirring speeches - although they were not necessarily appreciated immediately for their rhetorical distinction. This contrasts sharply with the supposed popularity of the speeches.⁵

Another low point may be seen to have occurred within the last two years of the war, although it is impossible to say definitively at which moment was Churchill's standing the lower. The process of decline began in mid-1943 when people's hopes for the implementation of Beveridge's proposals were repeatedly obstructed and

³ Michael Balfour, *Propaganda in War*, (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979). See Chapter 4 p. 146.

⁴ For example, Paul Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front*, (Pimlico, 1993) p. 334, David Cannadine, *In Churchill's Shadow*, (Allen Lane, 2002), p. 106, David Reynolds, "Churchill in 1940: the Worst and Finest Hour" in Blake and Louis, *Churchill*, p.254. See Chapter 2, p. 48 and Chapter 4, p. 185.

⁵ George Cassar, "Political Leaders in Wartime: Lloyd George and Churchill" in Bourne et al, *The Great World War, 1914-1945*, Vol. 1. p. 387. See also John Charmley, *Churchill: The End of Glory*, (Hodder and Staughton, 1993) p. 398. Introduction p. 5.

despondency about the post-war began to set in. The decline accelerated in 1944 when this disillusionment was accompanied by frustration that the war was set to continue into the following year. Towards the autumn of 1944 it became clear that the hopes inspired by the D-Day landings had been dashed and that the war would not be over by Christmas. Consequently, people's impatience to return to a semblance of normality and begin the long-awaited reconstruction programme took a strong hold. Churchill, it seemed, was prolonging the war by poor military judgement and his frequently voiced determination to pursue the war against Japan with utmost vigour. His belligerent character did not suit the new mood of the people. This calls into question the idea that the British public was politically apathetic during the war, as expounded by, amongst others, Steven Fielding.⁶ Instead, it reveals a highly motivated and highly politicised public, even if people were not necessarily politicised along party lines. It does not, however, help to untangle the debate on political consensus: for although people were largely unified in their hopes for post-war reform, the lack of a constructed plan made these hopes disparate and nebulous; only the ill-starred Beveridge plan provided a raft to which the public could cling.

If the second half of 1943 saw the beginnings of a decline in Churchill's reputation, the first half of the year saw the apogee. This period found most people hoping that Churchill would be sympathetic to their desire for post-war reform, as he had indicated in his Four Years' Plan broadcast in March, whilst at the same time his standing was boosted by the successful military ventures in North Africa and Italy. The Churchill Legend, which had already emerged by this date, added a further enhancement. In essence, there was little Churchill could do wrong at this moment, unlike in 1940 when the war stretched menacingly before the country.

The rises and falls in Churchill's popularity were affected by the three principal roles he played in the war: as a political leader, a military strategist and as an international statesman. The latter never had such a great bearing upon his overall popularity with the public as most people had no interest in or else failed to understand diplomatic affairs. It was, however, a revealing barometer of opinion. It showed, for example, how he had become indispensable towards the end of the war, principally for negotiating with the two main Allies. His experience and the relationships he had built up with Roosevelt and Stalin made him the ideal candidate to sooth tensions that were created as conflicting

⁶ Steven Fielding, "Popular Political Attitudes in Britain 1945-1951" p. 114 in Nick Tiratsoo (ed.), *The Attlee Years* (Pinter, 1991), pp. 106-125. Steven Fielding, Peter Thompson, and Nick Tiratsoo, *England Arise!*, (Manchester University Press, 1995). Chapter 5, p. 187.

views of the post-war world emerged and he was also seen to be crucial in the planning of joint military campaigns. This latter role overlapped with his position as a military strategist. Clearly this had a greater impact during 1940 and early 1941 when many people on the Home Front personally felt the destructive effects of the war, but it also arose at punctuated points throughout the war when a major military campaign proved successful - or not. Thus, as A.J.P. Taylor claimed, the sinking of the *Graf Spee*, the fall of Singapore and Tobruk and the success of Operation Torch all reflected the extremes in the fortunes of Churchill's popularity as revealed in the opinion polls.⁷ The only significant military event which did not do so was the invasion of the Continent in June 1944. By this date Churchill's role as a military leader had become virtually redundant. The importance of his qualities of determination and fortitude, so crucial earlier in the war, began to fade as victory came closer and people's attention began to turn to post-war reconstruction. Although his legendary standing may have secured his position as wartime Prime Minister, his Legend did not offer the benefits proffered by Beveridge and the Socialists. Pragmatically, these took precedence when the British public went to the polls in 1945. The rejection of the Conservatives ought not, however, be taken as a rejection of Churchill personally, rather it was an embrace of hopes for the future, for although Churchill represented many things, social reform was not one of them. Indicating the diversity of public opinion once again, he failed to appeal to the majority of the public on a political level, but his Legend remained intact.

Appreciating the complexity of public opinion therefore revises previous understandings of quite when Churchill was popular and unpopular during the war and also accredits the public as being discerning and critical. Far from being mere automatons who mechanically worshipped Churchill, people accepted and rejected him on different levels and on different occasions. Opinions were sometimes shared with the press, such as retrospective gratitude for his leadership in 1940, but often public opinion was independent of the press. Thus, the media's near obsession with him in 1940 did not indicate the public's uncritical adoption of him; neither did the media's criticism in 1942 mirror people's unmitigated dissatisfaction. Rather, the public's opinion of him was never quite so two-dimensional as press opinion nor was it ever quite so unforgiving as parliamentary opinion. This suggests that the three were quite distinct and that it is

⁷ A.J.P. Taylor, "The Statesman" p. 43 in *Churchill, Four Faces and the Man* (Book Club Associates, 1969), pp. 9-52. Chapter 4, p. 145.

therefore misleading to blur them, as has often happened in the past.⁸ Opinions did not filter down from the élite to the working-classes as was commonly supposed on the outbreak of war, which was revealed by the failure of the early Ministry of Information campaigns. Instead, each group created its own views and was based upon different motivations. Thus the press in 1940 was duty bound to portray Churchill, as the country's premier, in a positive light but once the direct threat to the country had passed, newspapers were more free to be critical. Similarly, parliamentary opinion differed in that it had a longer term memory than the others and was bound to a far greater degree by party affiliations and political machinations, whilst the public lived, largely, for the moment. Thus, when a strong leader was called for the public looked and found Churchill, yet when a social reformer was required and Churchill failed to live up to people's expectations, attention was directed elsewhere.

Highlighting the differences between these three types of opinion does not mean, however, that they were completely independent. On the contrary, the public in particular were susceptible to media coverage of Churchill in that the press raised issues for discussion which the public could then accept or reject. In airing its own grievances, the press gave sanction to the public to express theirs. When this sanction was largely missing, as through most of 1940, the impression was created that Churchill was indeed hugely popular, making the expression of any unfavourable opinion extremely difficult. Whilst this phenomenon was in evidence during the summer of 1940, it was at its most potent in the last months of 1939. Here the newsreels unfailingly drew attention to Churchill's widespread appeal and accompanied shots of Churchill with soundtracks of vast and cheering crowds where only a few people had gathered. This, together with his depiction in the press as having all the vital qualities required by the moment, accounted for any rise in his popularity before he acceded to the premiership. The Ministry of Information's endeavours of creating the paradigm of the national character and maintaining national unity also contributed to the emerging Legend. In addition, coverage in the media accounted to some extent for his diminishing standing later in the war. From 1943, Churchill made far fewer broadcasts and was seen far less in the newsreels. It could be unconvincingly argued that this was because the public had less interest in him, but the fact remained that Churchill was still newsworthy until the end of the war and any speeches he gave or visits he made were widely reported; lists of his

⁸ For example, Alan Foster, "Politicians, Public Opinion and the Press: The Storm of British Military Intervention in Greece in December 1944" in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 1984, pp. 453-494. Introduction, p. 14.

broadcasts and his appointments diaries reveal that he did in fact have far less to do with the Home Front than earlier in the war. This declining media coverage was accompanied, however, by a gradual accumulation of Churchill memorabilia. Whilst it would be ridiculous to claim that each and every house was crammed with such trinkets, their ready availability, especially once Downing Street relaxed its veto on their production, would have complemented the cult of personality that was emerging by 1941. The fact that Churchill's image was the only Government-sanctioned crockery decoration added to the sense of Churchill's inalienable leadership.

The implications of this revised view of Churchill's popularity run far wider than a study of his reputation. It reveals the need for the historian to be more aware of public opinion and indeed the psychology of the masses when addressing especially political questions, for it can influence a host of issues, for example, the way in which people vote or the degree of interest in any given topic. It also affects how people respond to the media and offers a view of the public that shows them to be at once discerning and critical, yet at the same time susceptible to a barrage of unilateral media coverage. Publicity surrounding Churchill during the war also raises questions about the nature of governmental propaganda. Whilst the Ministry of Information clearly did aim to provide a strictly democratic propaganda service, wherein the Government was simply supposed to provide information rather than dictate opinion, there were occasions when the boundaries with more totalitarian techniques became blurred. There is scope, therefore, for a reassessment of governmental publicity during the war which takes a more rigorous approach than previous works.⁹ An additional topic which would benefit from further research is the depiction of other prominent public figures during the war. The extreme conditions the war brought meant that they took on extra significance and on account of this, people such as Bevin and Lords Beaverbrook and Woolton became important figures in the maintenance of morale. Although they never came near to achieving Churchill's status, they certainly warrant more attention in terms of the public's view of them. This succinctly lends weight to the case for a study of leadership as seen from below. The parallels between the fortunes of Chamberlain, Churchill and Cripps suggest that there was a fundamentally uniform public reaction to leaders and it would be revealing to gauge if this differs in war and peace. It also opens the way for a study of the changing influence public opinion has had on politics, from the General Strike to the

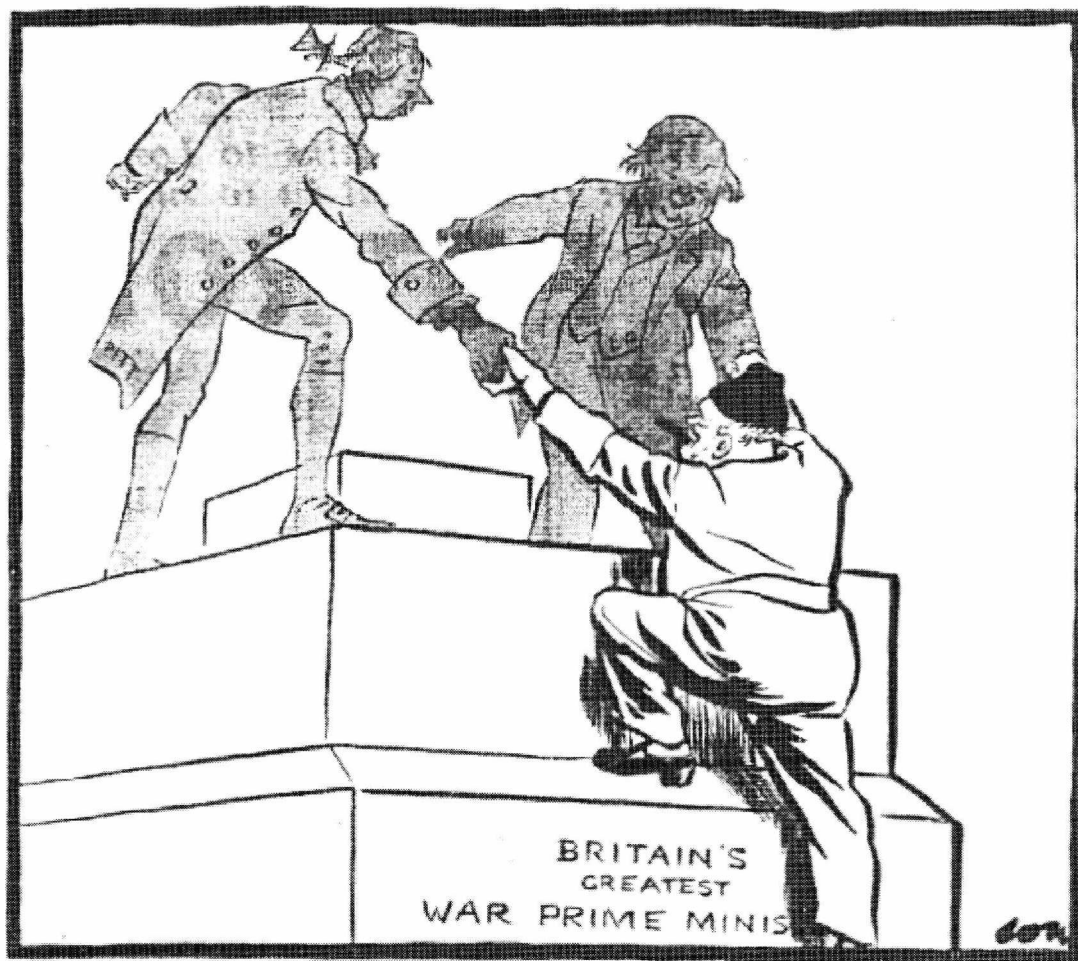
⁹ In particular, Ian McLaine's *Ministry of Morale*, (Allen and Unwin, 1979) which is rightly held as an important book, but it should not be taken, as it frequently is, to be the final word. Introduction p. 8.

Poll Tax and the recent war with Iraq, and how the media, politicians and the public interact, with an emphasis on the latter.

This thesis examines Churchill's leadership qualities as viewed by the British public during the Second World War. Their attitudes towards him reveal that he was, overall, an unrivalled leader, but that there were instances when his abilities as a leader of the people (as opposed to his diplomatic and military leadership) failed him. Rather than detracting from the Churchill Legend, however, this adds an extra dimension. Although there were many aspects of Churchill's image in his favour when he came to power in 1940, there were also many things which worried the British public or failed to inspire them. Equally, his increasing obsession with winning the war at the expense of domestic planning misjudged the mood of the country. Whilst this could be seen to be a failure on Churchill's part, it could also be seen as a strength: he was not swayed by the raucous evanescence of public opinion. These transgressions of his iconic status were largely forgotten by the Legend as it emerged and especially as it was consolidated in the post-war period. But such amelioration did not arise spontaneously. It was facilitated by an extensive media campaign which encompassed everything from coverage in the press to matchbox covers, whilst the emergent Myth of 1940 enabled the Churchill Legend to flourish. Indeed, the media campaign was crucial to the development of both. At the risk of labouring the point, the fact remains that without the ready availability of the means to communicate a favourable image to public, the establishment of the Legend would have been all the more difficult. And had they not been repeatedly pointed out, Churchill's speeches might never have been appreciated by the purblind British public. Certainly, their pertinence to the Myth aided their admission to posterity, but without the media's influence some very different phrases might have been remembered as typifying Churchill's rhetorical contribution to the war effort.

Revising the attitude of the British public in this way sheds further light on both Churchill and the memory of the war. It is not possible to substantiate either the Myth of the war or the Churchill Legend in their entirety, but a closer examination of public opinion does highlight people's need for steadfast leadership, even to the point of engineering a contrived popular memory. Churchill himself understood this and on the occasion of his eightieth birthday both disparaged his own role in 1940 whilst cementing the Legend and also giving the public, once again, what they wanted to hear:

It was the nation and the race dwelling all round the globe that had the lion's heart. I had the luck to be called upon to give the roar.



THURSDAY, MAY 10, 1945

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Appendix 1

Table of Churchill's speeches

Churchill's Principal Speeches During World War Two

1939				
Date	Place	Subject	Famous Phrases/ Comments	Audience figures for broadcasts (%)
1 October	Broadcast	The First Month of War		
8 November	House of Commons	The Loss of the Royal Oak and the War at Sea	“We shall break their hearts”	
12 November *	Broadcast	Ten Weeks of War		
6 December	House of Commons	Traffic at Sea		
18 December	Broadcast	Battle of the River Plate		

1940				
Date	Place	Subject	Famous Phrases/ Comments	Audience figures for broadcasts (%)
20 January	Broadcast	A House of Many Mansions		34.3
27 January	Manchester Free Trade Hall	A Time to Dare and Endure	“Come, then, let us to the task, to the toil”	35.9 (2.35-3.30pm)
23 February	Guildhall, London	The Navy is Here		** †
27 February	House of Commons	The Navy Estimates		
30 March	Broadcast	A Sterner War	“A hideous state of alarm and menace”	44.2
13 May *	House of Commons (first speech as Prime Minister)	Prime Minister	“Blood, toil, tears and sweat... Victory at all costs...Let us go forward together”	
19 May *	Broadcast (first broadcast as Prime Minister)	“Be Ye Men of Valour”		51‡
23 May	House of Commons	War Situation		
28 May	House of Commons	Fall of Belgium		
4 June *	House of Commons	Dunkirk	“We shall fight on the beaches...we shall never surrender...If necessary for years, if necessary alone”	

17 June	Broadcast	Message to the People		52.1‡
18 June *	House of Commons/ broadcast	Their Finest hour	“Though the British Commonwealth and her Empire last for a thousand years, men will still say “This was their finest hour””	59.8‡
25 June	House of Commons	The Fall of France		
4 July	House of Commons	Destruction French fleet		
14 July *	Broadcast	The War of the Unknown Warriors		64.4‡
20 August *	House of Commons	The War Situation	“Never in the field of human conflict have so many owed so much to so few...Like the Mississippi it just keeps rolling along”	
5 September	House of Commons	War situation	Siren policy	
11 September	Broadcast	Every man to his post		18.4**
17 September	House of Commons	War Situation		
8 October	House of Commons	War situation		
9 October	Caxton Hall	Leadership of Tory and Unionist parties		
21 October	Broadcast to French	Le Dieu Protégé la France		49
5 November	House of Commons	War Situation	War will last until 1943-44	
9 November	Mansion House	We will never cease to strike		
12 November	House of Commons	Chamberlain		
13 November	House of Commons	Attack on Italian Fleet at Taranto		
21 November	House of Commons	Parliament in wartime		
10 December	House of Commons	Britain attacks in Western desert		
12 December	House of Commons	Victory at Sidi Barrani		
18 December	Harrow School	Old School		
19 December	House of Commons	War Situation		
23 December	Broadcast to Italians	Call to the Italian people		

1941				
Date	Place	Subject	Famous Phrases/ Comments	Audience figures for broadcasts
17 January	Glasgow, during tour of civil defence organisations	We will not fail mankind		
22 January	House of Commons	Dark and deadly valley (war situation)		
9 February *	Broadcast	“Give us the tools”	“Give us the tools and we will finish the job”	70
27 February	House of Commons	Macdonald Bill		
12 March	House of Commons	New magna carta	Lend-lease	
27 March	Luncheon of British Employers’ Assoc & TUC	Trade unions’ sacrifices		
9 April	House of Commons	War situation		
12 April	Bristol University	University Ceremony		
27 April *	Broadcast	“Westward look”	Westward, look, the land is bright	76.9
3 May	Broadcast	To the People of Poland		†
7 May	House of Commons	War situation		
20 May	House of Commons	War situation		
22 May	House of Commons	Crete		
27 May	House of Commons	Sinking of the Bismarck		
2 June	Broadcast to Canada	To the people of Canada		22.8 Speeches by Churchill and Mackenzie King
10 June	House of Commons	War situation & Crete		
12 June	St James’ Palace	Our solid, stubborn strength		48.8 ** ‡
12 June	To Dominion High Commissioners and Allied countries’ reps	Until Victory is Won		
16 June	Broadcast to America	Receiving Honorary degree from University of Rochester		†
22 June *	Broadcast	Invasion of Russia: “The Fourth Climacteric”	Describes Hitler as a bloodthirsty guttersnipe	57.9
14 July	Hyde Park	Address to London CD workers		27.3 **

14 July	London County Council luncheon	Do your worst and we will do our best		27.3 ** (10 pm)
14 July	Message to de Gaulle	The Soul of France can never die		
15 July	House of Commons	War production and War situation		
20 July *	Message to people of Europe	V for Victory		
29 July	House of Commons	War production		
14 August *	Declaration after Atlantic conference	The Atlantic Charter		
24 August	Broadcast	Atlantic Charter		73.5
4 September	Mansion House	Canada and the War		46.9 ** speeches by Churchill and Mackenzie King
9 September	House of Commons	War situation	"We are still masters of our fate. We are still captain of our souls"	
30 September	House of Commons	War situation		
21 October	House of Commons	Defence Regulation 18B		
29 October	Harrow School	These are great days		
7 November	Guildhall & House of Commons (the H C speech not mentioned in <i>Unrelenting Struggle</i>)	All Will Be Well	Parity with Luftwaffe. Firm words to Japan	
8 November	Town Hall, Sheffield	Message to the people of Sheffield	"Everyone can play a hero's part"	
10 November	Lord Mayor's Day Luncheon	A warning to Japan		46.6
12 November	House of Commons	War situation		
20 November	House of Commons	Attack in Libya		
2 December	House of Commons	Man-power and Woman-power		
8 December *	House of Commons / Broadcast	War with Japan	Criticised for delivery	62.9
10 December	House of Commons	Loss of <i>Prince of Wales</i> and <i>Repulse</i>		
11 December	House of Commons	War situation		
24 December	Broadcast from Washington to the world	A strange Christmas Eve		
26 December *	Washington to Senate and house of Representatives	A long and hard war	"What kind of people do they think we are?" A widely lauded speech	55.6

30 December *	Ottawa broadcast	Preparation - Liberation - Assault	“Some chicken! Some neck!”	57.5
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1942				
Date	Place	Subject	Famous Phrases/ Comments	Audience figures for broadcasts
20 January	House of Commons	Statement regarding broadcast of speeches		
27 January	House of Commons	War situation. In debate on Vote of Confidence		
29 January	House of Commons	War Situation in debate on Vote of Confidence		
10 February	House of Commons	Service pay and allowances and minister of war production		
15 February	Broadcast	Fall of Singapore		65.4
17 February *	House of Commons	<i>Sharnhorst</i> and <i>Gneisenau</i>		
18 February	Outside No 10	Presentation of a canteen by Franckenstein		
23 February	Message to Stalin	Red Army's Anniversary		
24 February	House of Commons	Changes in the Government		
27 February	Message to conference of employers and workers in transport industry	Speed up the ships		
11 March	House of Commons	Cripp's mission to India		
12 March	House of Commons	Minister of Production's duties		
26 March	Caxton Hall	Outlook for 1942 to Conservative Central Council		
13 April	House of Commons	War Situation		
7 May	House of Commons	Statement	Landing on Madagascar	
10 May *	World Broadcast	Prime Minister for 2 years		60.9
12 May	Palace of Westminster	Home Guard		
16 May	Leeds.	The ridge ahead	“We see the ridge ahead”	
26 May	House of Commons	Libya, Essen, second front		
2 June	House of Commons	Statement on Libya		
11 June	Message to Stalin	Signing of Anglo-Soviet treaty		
22 June	Message to Stalin	On anniversary of German attack		

27 June	Statement after third visit to Washington	War outlook		
30 June	House of Commons	Response to Qs		
30 June	House of Commons	Auchinleck takes command		
1 July and 2 July	House of Commons	On debate of no confidence		
2 July	House of Commons	Conduct of the war		
7 July	House of Commons	Army and RAF co-operation		
8 September	House of Commons	War situation		
10 September	House of Commons	Situation in India		
11 September	House of Commons	Operations in Madagascar resumed		
29 September	House of Commons	Review of Madagascan operation		
1 October	Caxton Hall	Message to Central Council of National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations		
12 October	Usher Hall, Edinburgh	On receiving freedom of city of Edinburgh		57.3 **
12 October	Edinburgh	To inspection of civil defence workers		
15 October	House of Commons	Statement on Smuts' visit		
29 October	Message to Albert Hall meeting	Meeting against German atrocities		
31 October	Westminster	We cut the coal		
10 November *	London, Mansion House	The end of the beginning	"This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is perhaps the end of the beginning"	56.6 **
10 November	House of Commons	Armistice in Madagascar		
11 November	House of Commons	War situation		
29 November	Broadcast	Victory as a spur		62.4
5 December	Bradford Town Hall	One great family		
15 December	House of Commons	Fighting the U-boats		
15 December	House of Commons	The Churchill tank		

1943				
Date	Place	Subject	Famous Phrases/ Comments	Audience figures for broadcasts
11 February	House of Commons	War situation		
21 March	Broadcast	Four Years' Plan		73.8
24, 27, 30 March	House of Commons	The Tunisia Campaign		
11 May	House of Commons	Victory in North Africa Gas warning to Germany		
14 May	Broadcast from America	The Home Guard		67.8
19 May	Speech to Congress	See war against Japan to the end		53.9 (6.30-7.25 pm)
8 June	House of Commons	Brighter and more solid prospects		49.1 ‡ ††
30 June	Guildhall	Before the Autumn Leaves Fall		** †
22 July	Liberal Club, London	The Liberal Ideal		
27 July	House of Commons	Fall of Mussolini		
3 August	House of Commons	The Offensive in Sicily		
24 August	Quebec	Joint statement by Churchill and Roosevelt		
31 August	Broadcast, Quebec	The Call for a Three Power Talk	Quebec conference	58.5 ‡ ††
6 September	Harvard, Boston	Anglo-American Unity		
21 September	House of Commons	The War: Past, Present and Future		58 ‡ ††
29 September	Royal Albert Hall	The Women of Britain		
13 September	House of Commons	The Coalmining Situation		
28 October	House of Commons	Rebuilding the House of Commons	Advocates that the House of Commons be rebuilt with insufficient seats for all members so that it gives "a sense of crowd and urgency" when full	
9 November	Mansion House	No Time to Relax		54.3 **

1944				
Date	Place	Subject	Famous Phrases/ Comments	Audience figures for broadcasts
22 February	House of Commons	Preparation, effort, resolve		44.1 (6pm)‡ †† 54.8 (9 pm) ‡ ††
23 March	American Airforce in Britain	Our great American allies		
26 March	World broadcast	Hour of greatest effort is approaching		65.5
29 and 30 March	House of Commons	Test of confidence		
21 April	House of Commons	Spirit of the Empire		
10 May	House of Commons	Empire's aid to Russia		
24 May	House of Commons	World survey		
6 June	House of Commons	Invasion of France		
27 June	House of Commons	British Casualties in Italy		
6 July	House of Commons	The Flying Bomb	V1 rockets	
2 August	House of Commons	The War Situation		28.2 (6pm) ‡ †† 41.1 (9pm) ‡ ††
16 September	Quebec conference	Statement with FDR		
17 September	Quebec conference	Statement with FDR		
28 September	House of Commons	The War Situation		35.5 (6pm) ‡ †† 55.5 ‡ ††
5 October	House of Commons	Epic of Warsaw		
6 October	House of Commons	Town and country Planning		
19 October	Before visiting Moscow	Visit to Marshal Stalin		
27 October	House of Commons	War Situation		
31 October	House of Commons	Prolongation of Parliament		
1 November	House of Commons	Statement of long war and General Election		
9 November	Mansion House	The Fruits of 1944		57.2 ‡ **
10 November	House of Commons	Rockets	V2 rockets	
23 November	Albert Hall	Thanksgiving Day Speech		
29 November	House of Commons	'The Tasks which Lie before Us'		
30 November	House of Commons	Future of Lend Lease		
8 December	House of Commons	The crisis in Greece		

26 December	Meeting attended by Greek representatives	Conference in Athens		
27 December	Press conference in Athens	The Greek Situation		

1945				
Date	Place	Subject	Famous Phrases/ Comments	Audience figures for broadcasts
18 January	House of Commons	Review of the War		35 (6pm) ‡ †† 56.8 (9pm) ‡ ††
27 Feb	House of Commons	Yalta Conference		
28 Mar	House of Commons	Death of Lloyd George		
17 Apr	House of Commons	Death of FDR		
8 May	Broadcast, London and House of Commons	End of the War in Europe		71.5
8 May *	London	‘This is Your Victory’		
8 May *	London	To V-E Crowds		
8 May	Broadcast, London	To People of the Empire in the Far-East		68.9
9 May	London	‘Good Old London’		
4 June *	Broadcast, London	Party Politics Again		48.1
21 June	Political Broadcast, London	A Threat to Freedom		
26 July	10 Downing Street	Resignation Statement		
15 Aug	House of Commons	‘True Glory’ Surrender of Japan		
16 Aug	House of Commons	The supreme triumph	Iron Curtain	

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12, BBC Written Archives Centre.

* Indicates the text of the speech is given in Appendix 2.

** Recording.

† The speech was broadcast but no figures are available.

†† The speech was read out by a newsreader.

‡ Figures also include audience for the 9 pm news.

Appendix 2

Churchill's Speeches

"First Ten Weeks of War"

Broadcast

12th November 1939

I thought it would be a good thing for me to tell you now how well the war has turned for the Allies during the first ten weeks. It is quite plain that the power of the British Empire and the French Republic to restore and revive the life of the Polish, Czech and Slovak peoples, as well as to do a few other things which I will mention later, has been growing every day. Peaceful parliamentary countries, which aim at freedom for the individual and abundance for the mass, start with a heavy handicap against a dictatorship whose sole theme has been war, the preparation for war, and the grinding up of everything and everybody into its military machine. In our Island particularly we are very easy going in time of peace. We should like to share the blessings of peace with every nation; and to go on enjoying them ourselves. It is only after many vain attempts to remain at peace that we have been at last forced to go to war. We tried again and again to prevent this war, and for the sake of peace we put up with a lot of things happening which ought not to have happened. But now we are at war, and we are going to make war, and persevere in making war, until the other side have had enough of it. We are going to persevere as far as we can to the best of our ability ; which is not small and is always growing. You know I have not always agreed with Mr. Chamberlain though we have always been personal friends. But he is a man of very tough fibre, and I can tell you that he is going to fight as obstinately for victory as he did for peace. You may take it Absolutely for certain that either all that Britain and France stand for in the modern world will go down, or that Hitler, the Nazi régime and the recurring German or Prussian menace to Europe will be broken and destroyed. That is the way the matter lies and everybody had better make up their minds to that solid, sombre fact.

Nowadays we are assailed by a chorus of horrid threats. The Nazi Government exudes through every neutral State inside information of the frightful vengeance they are going to wreak- upon us, and they also bawl it around the world by their leather-lunged propaganda machine. If words could kill, we should be dead already. But we are not disturbed by these blood-curdling threats. Indeed, we take them as a sign of weakness in our foes. We do not make threats in time of war. If at any time we should have some ideas of an offensive character, we should not talk about them; we should try to see how they worked out in action.

We do not at all underrate the power and malignity of our enemies. We are prepared to endure tribulation. But we made up our minds about all this ten weeks ago, and everything that has happened since has made us feel that we were right then and are still right now. No one in the British Islands supposed this was going to be a short or easy war. Nothing has ever impressed me so much as the calm, steady, business-like resolution with which the masses of our wage-earning folk and ordinary people in our great cities faced what they imagined would be a fearful storm about to fall on them and their families at the very first moment. They all prepared themselves to have the worst happen to them at once, and they braced themselves for the ordeal. They did not see what else there was to do. We have been agreeably surprised that ten weeks have been allotted to us to get into fighting trim. We are in a very different position from what we were ten weeks ago. We are far stronger than we were ten weeks ago ; we are far better prepared to endure the worst malice of Hitler and his Huns than we were at the beginning of September. Our Navy is stronger. Our anti-U-boat forces are three times as numerous. Our Air Force is much stronger. Our Army is growing in numbers and

improving in training every day. Our Air Raid Precautions are very different from what they were at the outbreak of war. The attack of the U-boats has been controlled and they have paid a heavy toll. Nearly all the German ocean-going ships are in hiding and rusting in neutral harbours, while our world-wide trade steadily proceeds in 4,000 vessels of which 2,500 are constantly at sea.

The superior quality of our Air Force has been proved both in pilots and machines over the enemy. Our aircraft shot down fifteen German oversea raiders, without losing one machine in the combats. Now the mists and storms of winter wrap our island and make continuous bombing attack of military objectives far more difficult. We have a marked advantage in the higher range of science applied to war, and this is improving with every week that passes.

I do not doubt myself that time is on our side. I go so far as to say that if we come through the winter without any large or important event occurring we shall in fact have gained the first campaign of the war: and we shall be able to set about our task in the spring far stronger, better organised and better armed than ever before. Let us therefore bear discomfort and many minor - and even perhaps needless - with comprehending patience, because we are all the time moving forward towards greater war strength, and because Germany is all the time, under the grip of our economic warfare, falling back in oil and other essential war supplies.

It may be, of course, that at any time violent and dire events will open. If so, we shall confront them with resolution. If not, we shall profit to the full by the time at our disposal. But Field-Marshal Goering - who is one of the few Germans who has been having a pretty good time for the last few years - says that we have been spared so far because Nazi Germany is so humane. They cannot bear to do anything to hurt anybody. All they ask for is the right to live and to be let alone to conquer and kill the weak. Their humanity forbids them to apply seventies to the strong. It may be true. but when we remember the bestial atrocities they have committed in Poland, we do not feel we wish to ask for any favours to be shown us. We shall do our duty as long as we have life and strength.

A long succession of important events has moved in our favour since the beginning of the war. Italy, which we had feared would be drawn from her historic partnership with Britain and France in the Mediterranean - a partnership which will become increasingly fruitful - has adopted a wise policy of peace. No quarrel has developed between us and Japan. These two great Powers, which had joined Nazi Germany in the Anti-Comintern Pact, find it difficult to accommodate themselves to the change of front towards Bolshevism which Herr Hitler and his had adviser, Herr von Ribbentrop - that prodigious contortionist - have perpetrated. No-one can underrate the importance of the Treaty of Alliance between Britain and France with Turkey. The Russian Soviet Government embodied in the formidable figure of Stalin, has barred off once and for ever all Nazi dreams of an advance in the east. The left paw of the Bear bars Germany from the Black Sea; the right paw disputes with her the control of the Baltic. Whatever history may record about these events, the fact which we have to reckon with is perfectly plain. Nazi Germany is barred off from the east, and has to conquer the British Empire and the French Republic or perish in the attempt.

So now these boastful and bullying Nazis are looking with hungry eyes for some small countries in the west which they can trample down and loot, as they have trampled down and looted Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Now they turn their fierce, but also rather circumspect, glare upon the ancient, civilised and unoffending Dutch and Belgian nations. They have not chosen to molest the British Fleet, which has awaited their attack in the Firth of Forth during the last week; they recoil from the steel front of the French army along the Maginot Line; but their docile conscripts are being crowded in

vast numbers upon the frontiers of Holland and Belgium. To both these States the Nazis have given the most recent and solemn guarantees; no wonder anxiety is great. No one believes one word Herr Hitler and the Nazi party say, and therefore we must regard that situation as grave.

I shall not attempt to prophesy whether the frenzy of a cornered maniac will drive Herr Hitler into the worst of all his crimes; but this I will say without a doubt, that the fate of Holland and Belgium, like that of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Austria, will be decided by the victory of the British Empire and the French Republic. If we are conquered, all will be enslaved, and the United States will be left single-handed to guard the rights of man. If we are not destroyed, all these countries will be rescued and restored to life and freedom.

It is indeed a solemn moment when I speak to you on this tenth Sunday after the outbreak of war. But it is also a moment sustained by resolve and hope. I am in the singular position of having lived through the early months of the last German war upon Europe in the same position, in charge of the British Admiralty, as I am now. I am therefore very careful not to say anything of an over-confident or unduly sanguine nature. I am sure we have very rough weather ahead; but I have this feeling, that the Germany which assaults us all to-day is a far less strongly-built and solidly-founded organism than that which the Allies and the United States forced to beg for armistice twenty-one years ago. I have the sensation and also the conviction that that evil man over there and his cluster of confederates are not sure of themselves, as we are sure of ourselves; that they are harassed in their guilty souls by the thought and by the fear of an ever-approaching retribution for their crimes, and for the orgy of destruction in which they have plunged us all. As they look out to-night from their blatant, panoplied, clattering Nazi Germany, they cannot find one single friendly eye in the whole circumference of the globe. Not one I Russia returns them a flinty stare; Italy averts her gaze ; Japan is puzzled and thinks herself betrayed. Turkey and the whole of Islam have ranged themselves instinctively but decisively on the side of progress. The hundreds of millions of people in India and in China, whatever their other feelings, would regard with undisguised dread a Nazi triumph, well knowing what their fate would soon be. The great English-speaking Republic across the Atlantic Ocean makes no secret of its sympathies or of its self-questionings, and translates these sentiments into actions of a character which anyone may judge for himself. The whole world is against Hitler and Hitlerism. Men of every race and clime feel that this monstrous apparition stands between them and the forward move which is their due, and for which the age is ripe. Even in Germany itself there are millions who stand aloof from the seething mass of criminality and corruption constituted by the Nazi party machine. Let them take courage amid perplexities and perils, for it may well be that the final extinction of a baleful domination will pave the way to a broader solidarity of all the men in all the lands than we could ever have planned if we had not marched together through the fire.

“Blood, Toil, Tears, and Sweat”

House of Commons

13th May 1940

On Friday evening last I received His Majesty's Commission to form a new administration. It was the evident wish and will of Parliament and the nation that this should be conceived on the broadest possible basis and that it should include all parties, both those that supported the late Government and also the parties of the Opposition. I have completed most important part of this task. A War Cabinet has been formed of five Members, representing, with the Opposition Liberals the unity of the nation. The three party leaders have agreed to serve, either in the War Cabinet or in high executive office. The three Fighting Services have been filled. It was necessary that this should be done in one single day on account of the extreme and rigour of events. A number of other key positions were filled yesterday, and I am submitting a further list to His Majesty tonight. I hope to complete the appointment of the principal Ministers during tomorrow. The appointment of the other Ministers usually takes a little longer, but I trust that when Parliament meets again this part of my task will be completed and that the administration will be complete in all respects.

I considered it in the public interest to suggest that the House should be summoned to meet to-day. Mr Speaker agreed, and took the necessary steps, in accordance with the powers conferred upon him by the Resolution of the House. At the end of the proceedings today, the Adjournment of the House will be proposed until Tuesday, 21st May, with of course, provision for the an earlier meeting if need be. The business to be considered during that week will be notified to members at the earliest opportunity. I now invite the House, by the Resolution which stands in my name, to record its approval of the steps taken and to declare its confidence in the new Government.

To form a new Administration of this scale and complexity is a serious undertaking in itself, but it must be remembered that we are at the preliminary stage of one of the greatest battles in history, that we are in action at many points in Norway, and in Holland, that we have to be prepared in the Mediterranean, that the air battle is continuous and that many, preparations have to be made here at home. In this crisis I hope I may be pardoned if I do not address the House at any length today. I hope that any of my friends and colleagues, or former colleagues, who are affected by the political reconstruction, will make all allowance for any lack of ceremony with which it has been necessary to act. I would say to the House, as I said to those who have joined the Government: “I have nothing to offer but blood toil tears and sweat”.

We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind, We have before us many, many long months of struggle and of suffering. You ask, what is our policy? I will say: It is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us: to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy. You ask, What is our aim? I can answer in one word: Victory - victory - at all costs, victory, in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival. Let that be realised; no survival for the British Empire; no survival for all that the British Empire has stood for, no survival for the urge and impulse of the ages, that mankind will move forward towards its goal. But I take up my task with buoyancy and hope. I feel sure that our cause will not be suffered to fail among men. At this time I feel entitled to claim the aid of all, and I say, “Come, then, let us go forward together with our united strength.”

“Be Ye Men of Valour”

**Broadcast
19th May 1940**

I speak to you for the first time as Prime Minister in a solemn hour for the life of our country, of our Empire, of our Allies, and above all the cause of Freedom. A tremendous battle is raging in France and Flanders. The Germans, by a remarkable combination of air bombing and heavily armoured attacks have broken through the French defences north of the Maginot Line and strong columns of their armoured vehicles are ravaging the open country, which for the first day or two was without defenders. They have penetrated deeply and spread alarm and confusion in their track. Behind them there are now appearing infantry in lorries, and behind them, again, the large masses are moving forward. The regroupment of the French armies to make head against, and also to strike at, this intruding wedge has been proceeding for several days, largely assisted by the magnificent efforts of the Royal Air Force.

We must not allow ourselves to be intimidated by the presence of these armoured -vehicles in unexpected places behind our lines. If they are behind our Front, the French are also at many points fighting actively behind theirs. Both sides are therefore in an extremely dangerous position. And if the French Army, and our own Army are well handled, as I believe they will be; if the French retain that genius for recovery, and counterattack for which they have so long been famous; and if the British Army shows the dogged endurance and solid fighting power of which there have been so many examples in the past - then a sudden transformation of the scene might spring into being.

It would be foolish, however to disguise the gravity of the hour. It would be still more foolish to lose heart and courage or to suppose that well-trained and well-equipped armies numbering three to four millions of men can be overcome in the space of a few, weeks, or even months, by a scoop, or raid of mechanised vehicles, however formidable. We may look with confidence to the stabilisation of the Front in France, and to the general engagement of the masses which will enable the qualities of the French and British soldiers to be matched squarely against those of their adversaries. For myself, I have invincible confidence in the French Army and its leaders. Only a very small part of that Army has yet been heavily engaged; and only a very small part of France has yet been invaded. There is good evidence to show that practically the whole of the specialised mechanised forces of the enemy have already been thrown into the battle; and we know that very heavy losses have been inflicted upon them. No officer or man, no brigade or division, which grapples at close quarters with the enemy, wherever encountered, can fail to make a worthy contribution to the general result. The Armies by cast away the idea of resisting behind concrete lines or natural obstacles, and must realise that mastery can only be regained by furious and unrelenting assault. And this spirit must not only animate the High Command, but must inspire every fighting man.

In the air - often at serious odds - often at odds hitherto thought overwhelming - we have been clawing down three or four to one of our enemies; and the relative balance of the British and German Air Forces is now considerably more favourable to us than at the beginning of the battle. In cutting down the German bombers, we are fighting our battle as well as that of France. My confidence in our ability to fight it out to the finish with the German Air force has been strengthened by the fierce encounters which have taken place and are taking place. At the same time our heavy bombers are striking nightly at the tap root of German mechanised power, and have already inflicted serious

damage upon the oil refineries which the Nazi effort to dominate the world directly depends.

We must expect that as soon as stability is reached on the Western Front, the bulk of that hideous apparatus of aggression which gashed Holland into ruin and slavery in a few days, will be turned upon us. I am sure I speak for all when I say we are ready to face it; to endure it; and to retaliate against it - to any extent that the unwritten laws of war permit. There will be, many men, and many women, in this island, who when the ordeal comes upon them, as come it will, will feel comfort, and even pride - that they are sharing the perils of the lads at the front - soldiers, sailors and airmen, God bless them - and are drawing away from them a part at least of the onslaught they have to bear. Is this not the appointed time for all to make the utmost exertions in their power? If the battle is to be won, we must provide our men with ever increasing quantities of weapons and ammunition they need. We must have, and have quickly, more aeroplanes, more tanks, more shells, more guns. There is an imperious need for these munitions. They increase our strength against the powerfully armed enemy. They replace the wastage of obstinate struggle; and the knowledge that wastage will be speedily replaced enables us to draw more readily upon our reserves and throw them in now that everything counts so much.

Our task is not only to win the battle - but to win the War. After this battle in France abates its force, there will come the battle for our island - for all that Britain is, and all that Britain means - that will be the struggle. In that supreme emergency we shall not hesitate to take every step, even the most drastic, to call forth from our people, the last ounce and the last inch of effort they are capable. The interests of property, the hours of labour, are nothing compared with the struggle for life and honour, for right and freedom, to which we have vowed ourselves.

I have received from the Chiefs of the French Republic, and in particular from its indomitable Prime Minister, M. Reynaud, the most sacred pledges that whatever happens they will fight to the end, be it bitter or be it glorious. Nay, if we fight to the end, it can only be glorious.

Having received His Majesty's commission, I have formed an administration of men and women of every party and of almost every point of view. We have differed and quarrelled in the past; but now one bond unites us all - to wage war until victory is won, and never to surrender ourselves to servitude and shame, whatever the cost and agony may be. This is one of the most awe-striking periods in the long history of France and Britain. It is also beyond doubt the most sublime. Side by side, unaided except by their kith and kin in the great Dominions and by the wide Empires which rest beneath their shield, the British and French peoples have advanced to rescue not only Europe, but mankind from the foulest and most soul-destroying tyranny which has ever darkened and stained the pages of history. Behind them - behind us - behind the armies and fleets of Britain and France - gather a group of shattered States and bludgeoned races: the Czechs, the Poles, the Norwegians, the Danes, the Dutch, the Belgians - upon all of whom the long night of barbarism will descend, unbroken even by a star of hope, unless we conquer, as conquer we must; as conquer we shall.

Today is Trinity Sunday. Centuries ago words were written to be a call and a spur to the faithful servants of Truth and Justice: "Arm yourselves, and be ye men of valour, and be in readiness for the conflict; for it is better for us to perish in battle than to look upon the outrage of our nation and our altar. As the Will of God is in Heaven, even so let it be."

"We shall fight on the beaches"

4th June 1940

House of Commons

From the moment that the French defences at Sedan and on the Meuse were broken at the end of the second week of May, only a rapid retreat to Amiens and the south could have saved the British and French Armies who had entered Belgium at the appeal of the Belgian King; but this strategic fact was not immediately realised. The French High Command hoped they would be able to close the gap, and the Armies of the north were under their orders. Moreover, a retirement of this kind would have involved almost certainly the destruction of the fine Belgian Army of over 20 divisions and the abandonment of the whole of Belgium. Therefore, when the force and scope of the German penetration were realised and when a new French Generalissimo, General Weygand, assumed command in place of General Gamelin, an effort was made by the French and British Armies in Belgium to keep on holding the right hand of the Belgians and to give their own right hand to a newly created French Army which was to have advanced across the Somme in great strength to grasp it.

However, the German eruption swept like a sharp scythe around the right and rear of the Armies of the north. Eight or nine armoured divisions, each of about four hundred armoured vehicles of different kinds, but carefully assorted to be complementary and divisible into small self-contained units, cut off all communications between us and the main French Armies. It severed our own communications for food and ammunition, which ran first to Amiens and afterwards through Abbeville, and it shore its way up the coast to Boulogne and Calais, and almost to Dunkirk. Behind this armoured and mechanised onslaught came a number of German divisions in lorries, and behind them again there plodded comparatively slowly the dull brute mass of the ordinary German Army and German people, always so ready to be led to the trampling down in other lands of liberties and comforts which they have never known in their own.

I have said this armoured scythe-stroke almost reached Dunkirk - almost but not quite. Boulogne and Calais were the scenes of desperate fighting. The Guards defended Boulogne for a while and were then withdrawn by orders from this country. The Rifle Brigade, the 60th Rifles, and the Queen Victoria's Rifles, with a battalion of British tanks and 1,000 Frenchmen, in all about four thousand strong, defended Calais to the last. The British Brigadier was given an hour to surrender. He spurned the offer, and four days of intense street fighting passed before silence reigned over Calais, which marked the end of a memorable resistance. Only 30 unwounded survivors were brought off by the Navy, and we do not know the fate of their comrades. Their sacrifice, however, was not in vain. At least two armoured divisions, which otherwise would have been turned against the British Expeditionary Force, had to be sent to overcome them. They have added another page to the glories of the light divisions, and the time gained enabled the Graveline water lines to be flooded and to be held by the French troops.

Thus it was that the port of Dunkirk was kept open. When it was found impossible for the Armies of the north to reopen their communications to Amiens with the main French Armies, only one choice remained. It seemed, indeed, forlorn. The Belgian, British and French Armies were almost surrounded. Their sole line of retreat was to a single port and to its neighbouring beaches. They were pressed on every side by heavy attacks and far outnumbered in the air.

When, a week ago today, I asked the House to fix this afternoon as the occasion for a statement, I feared it would be my hard lot to announce the greatest military

disaster in our long history. I thought - and some good judges agreed with me - that perhaps 20,000 or 30,000 men might be re-embarked. But it certainly seemed that the whole of the French First Army and the whole of the British Expeditionary Force north of the Amiens-Abbeville gap would be broken up in the open field or else would have to capitulate for lack of food and ammunition. These were the hard and heavy tidings for which I called upon the House and the nation to prepare themselves a week ago. The whole root and core and brain of the British Army, on which and around which we were to build, and are to build, the great British Armies in the later years of the war, seemed about to perish upon the field or to be led into an ignominious and starving captivity.

That was the prospect a week ago. But another blow which might well have proved final was yet to fall upon us. The King of the Belgians had called upon us to come to his aid. Had not this Ruler and his Government severed themselves from the Allies, who rescued their country from extinction in the late war, and had they not sought refuge in what was proved to be a fatal neutrality, the French and British Armies might well at the outset have saved not only Belgium but perhaps even Poland. Yet at the last moment, when Belgium was already invaded, King Leopold called upon us to come to his aid, and even at the last moment we came. He and his brave, efficient Army, nearly half a million strong, guarded our left flank and thus kept open our only line of retreat to the sea. Suddenly, without prior consultation, with the least possible notice, without the advice of his Ministers and upon his own personal act, he sent a plenipotentiary to the German Command, surrendered his Army, and exposed our whole flank and means of retreat.

I asked the House a week ago to suspend its judgment because the facts were not clear, but I do not feel that any reason now exists why we should not form our own opinions upon this pitiful episode. The surrender of the Belgian Army compelled the British at the shortest notice to cover a flank to the sea more than 30 miles in length. Otherwise all would have been cut off, and all would have shared the fate to which King Leopold had condemned the finest Army his country had ever formed. So in doing this and in exposing this flank, as anyone who followed the operations on the map will see, contact was lost between the British and two out of the three corps forming the First French Army, who were still farther from the coast than we were, and it seemed impossible that any large number of Allied troops could reach the coast.

The enemy attacked on all sides with great strength and fierceness, and their main power, the power of their far more numerous Air Force, was thrown into the battle or else concentrated upon Dunkirk and the beaches. Pressing in upon the narrow exit, both from the east and from the west, the enemy began to fire with cannon upon the beaches by which alone the shipping could approach or depart. They sowed magnetic mines in the channels and seas; they sent repeated waves of hostile aircraft, sometimes more than a hundred strong in one formation, to cast their bombs upon the single pier that remained, and upon the sand dunes upon which the troops had their eyes for shelter. Their U-boats, one of which was sunk, and their motor launches took their toll of the vast traffic which now began. For four or five days an intense struggle reigned. All their armoured divisions-or what was left of them-together with great masses of infantry and artillery, hurled themselves in vain upon the ever-narrowing, ever-contracting appendix within which the British and French Armies fought.

Meanwhile, the Royal Navy, with the willing help of countless merchant seamen, strained every nerve to embark the British and Allied troops; 220 light warships and 650 other vessels were engaged. They had to operate upon the difficult coast, often in adverse weather, under an almost ceaseless hail of bombs and an increasing concentration of artillery fire. Nor were the seas, as I have said, themselves free from mines and torpedoes. It was in conditions such as these that our men carried on, with

little or no rest, for days and nights on end, making trip after trip across the dangerous waters, bringing with them always men whom they had rescued. The numbers they have brought back are the measure of their devotion and their courage. The hospital ships, which brought off many thousands of British and French wounded, being so plainly marked were a special target for Nazi bombs; but the men and women on board them never faltered in their duty.

Meanwhile, the Royal Air Force, which had already been intervening in the battle, so far as its range would allow, from home bases, now used part of its main metropolitan fighter strength, and struck at the German bombers and at the fighters which in large numbers protected them. This struggle was protracted and fierce. Suddenly the scene has cleared, the crash and thunder has for the moment-but only for the moment-died away. A miracle of deliverance, achieved by valour, by perseverance, by perfect discipline, by faultless service, by resource, by skill, by unconquerable fidelity, is manifest to us all. The enemy was hurled back by the retreating British and French troops. He was so roughly handled that he did not hurry their departure seriously. The Royal Air Force engaged the main strength of the German Air Force, and inflicted upon them losses of at least four to one; and the Navy, using nearly 1,000 ships of all kinds, carried over 335,000 men, French and British, out of the jaws of death and shame, to their native land and to the tasks which lie immediately ahead. We must be very careful not to assign to this deliverance the attributes of a victory. Wars are not won by evacuations. But there was a victory inside this deliverance, which should be noted. It was gained by the Air Force. Many of our soldiers coming back have not seen the Air Force at work; they saw only the bombers which escaped its protective attack. They underrate its achievements. I have heard much talk of this; that is why I go out of my way to say this. I will tell you about it.

This was a great trial of strength between the British and German Air Forces. Can you conceive a greater objective for the Germans in the air than to make evacuation from these beaches impossible, and to sink all these ships which were displayed, almost to the extent of thousands? Could there have been an objective of greater military importance and significance for the whole purpose of the war than this? They tried hard, and they were beaten back; they were frustrated in their task. We got the Army away; and they have paid fourfold for any losses which they have inflicted. Very large formations of German aeroplanes - and we know that they are a very brave race - have turned on several occasions from the attack of one-quarter of their number of the Royal Air Force, and have dispersed in different directions. Twelve aeroplanes have been hunted by two. One aeroplane was driven into the water and cast away by the mere charge of a British aeroplane, which had no more ammunition. All of our types - the Hurricane, the Spitfire and the new Defiant - and all our pilots have been vindicated as superior to what they have at present to face.

When we consider how much greater would be our advantage in defending the air above this Island against an overseas attack, I must say that I find in these facts a sure basis upon which practical and reassuring thoughts may rest. I will pay my tribute to these young airmen. The great French Army was very largely, for the time being, cast back and disturbed by the onrush of a few thousands of armoured vehicles. May it not also be that the cause of civilisation itself will be defended by the skill and devotion of a few thousand airmen? There never has been, I suppose, in all the world, in all the history of war, such an opportunity for youth. The Knights of the Round Table, the Crusaders, all fall back into the past-not only distant but prosaic; these young men, going forth every morn to guard their native land and all that we stand for, holding in their hands these instruments of colossal and shattering power, of whom it may be said that

“Every morn brought forth a noble chance And every chance brought forth a noble knight”,

deserve our gratitude, as do all the brave men who, in so many ways and on so many occasions, are ready, and continue ready to give life and all for their native land.

I return to the Army. In the long series of very fierce battles, now on this front, now on that, fighting on three fronts at once, battles fought by two or three divisions against an equal or somewhat larger number of the enemy, and fought fiercely on some of the old grounds that so many of us knew so well—in these battles our losses in men have exceeded 30,000 killed, wounded and missing. I take occasion to express the sympathy of the House to all who have suffered bereavement or who are still anxious. The President of the Board of Trade [Sir Andrew Duncan] is not here today. His son has been killed, and many in the House have felt the pangs of affliction in the sharpest form. But I will say this about the missing: We have had a large number of wounded come home safely to this country, but I would say about the missing that there may be very many reported missing who will come back home, some day, in one way or another. In the confusion of this fight it is inevitable that many have been left in positions where honour required no further resistance from them.

Against this loss of over 30,000 men, we can set a far heavier loss certainly inflicted upon the enemy. But our losses in material are enormous. We have perhaps lost one-third of the men we lost in the opening days of the battle of 21st March, 1918, but we have lost nearly as many guns - nearly one thousand - and all our transport, all the armoured vehicles that were with the Army in the north. This loss will impose a further delay on the expansion of our military strength. That expansion had not been proceeding as far as we had hoped. The best of all we had to give had gone to the British Expeditionary Force, and although they had not the numbers of tanks and some articles of equipment which were desirable, they were a very well and finely equipped Army. They had the first-fruits of all that our industry had to give, and that is gone. And now here is this further delay. How long it will be, how long it will last, depends upon the exertions which we make in this island. An effort the like of which has never been seen in our records is now being made. Work is proceeding everywhere, night and day, Sundays and week-days. Capital and Labour have cast aside their interests, rights, and customs and put them into the common stock. Already the flow of munitions has leaped forward. There is no reason why we should not in a few months overtake the sudden and serious loss that has come upon us, without retarding the development of our general programme.

Nevertheless, our thankfulness at the escape of our Army and so many men, whose loved ones have passed through an agonising week, must not blind us to the fact that what has happened in France and Belgium is a colossal military disaster. The French Army has been weakened, the Belgian Army has been lost, a large part of those fortified lines upon which so much faith had been reposed is gone, many valuable mining districts and factories have passed into the enemy's possession, the whole of the Channel ports are in his hands, with all the tragic consequences that follow from that, and we must expect another blow to be struck almost immediately at us or at France. We are told that Herr Hitler has a plan for invading the British Isles. This has often been thought of before. When Napoleon lay at Boulogne for a year with his flat-bottomed boats and his Grand Army, he was told by someone. "There are bitter weeds in England." There are certainly a great many more of them since the British Expeditionary Force returned.

The whole question of home defence against invasion is, of course, powerfully affected by the fact that we have for the time being in this Island incomparably more powerful military forces than we have ever had at any moment in this war or the last.

But this will not continue. We shall not be content with a defensive war. We have our duty to our Ally. We have to reconstitute and build up the British Expeditionary Force once again, under its gallant Commander-in-Chief, Lord Gort. All this is in train; but in the interval we must put our defences in this Island into such a high state of organisation that the fewest possible numbers will be required to give effective security and that the largest possible potential of offensive effort may be realised. On this we are now engaged. It will be very convenient, if it be the desire of the House, to enter upon this subject in a secret Session. Not that the government would necessarily be able to reveal in very great detail military secrets, but we like to have our discussions free, without the restraint imposed by the fact that they will be read the next day by the enemy; and the Government would benefit by views freely expressed in all parts of the House by Members with their knowledge of so many different parts of the country. I understand that some request is to be made upon this subject, which will be readily acceded to by His Majesty's Government.

We have found it necessary to take measures of increasing stringency, not only against enemy aliens and suspicious characters of other nationalities, but also against British subjects who may become a danger or a nuisance should the war be transported to the United Kingdom. I know there are a great many people affected by the orders which we have made who are the passionate enemies of Nazi Germany. I am very sorry for them, but we cannot, at the present time and under the present stress, draw all the distinctions which we should like to do. If parachute landings were attempted and fierce fighting attendant upon them followed, these unfortunate people would be far better out of the way, for their own sakes as well as for ours. There is, however, another class, for which I feel not the slightest sympathy. Parliament has given us the powers to put down Fifth Column activities with a strong hand, and we shall use those powers subject to the supervision and correction of the House, without the slightest hesitation until we are satisfied, and more than satisfied, that this malignancy in our midst has been effectively stamped out.

Turning once again, and this time more generally, to the question of invasion, I would observe that there has never been a period in all these long centuries of which we boast when an absolute guarantee against invasion, still less against serious raids, could have been given to our people. In the days of Napoleon the same wind which would have carried his transports across the Channel might have driven away the blockading fleet. There was always the chance, and it is that chance which has excited and befooled the imaginations of many Continental tyrants. Many are the tales that are told. We are assured that novel methods will be adopted, and when we see the originality of malice, the ingenuity of aggression, which our enemy displays, we may certainly prepare ourselves for every kind of novel stratagem and every kind of brutal and treacherous manoeuvre. I think that no idea is so outlandish that it should not be considered and viewed with a searching, but at the same time, I hope, with a steady eye. We must never forget the solid assurances of sea power and those which belong to air power if it can be locally exercised.

I have, myself, full confidence that if all do their duty, if nothing is neglected, and if the best arrangements are made, as they are being made, we shall prove ourselves once again able to defend our Island home, to ride out the storm of war, and to outlive the menace of tyranny, if necessary for years, if necessary alone. At any rate, that is what we are going to try to do. That is the resolve of His Majesty's Government—every man of them. That is the will of Parliament and the nation. The British Empire and the French Republic, linked together in their cause and in their need, will defend to the death their native soil, aiding each other like good comrades to the utmost of their strength. Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous States have fallen or may fall

into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender, and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old.

“Their Finest Hour”

House of Commons
18th June 1940

I spoke the other day of the colossal military disaster which occurred when the French High Command failed to withdraw the Northern Armies from Belgium at the moment when they knew that the French front was decisively broken at Sedan and on the Meuse. This delay entailed the loss of fifteen or sixteen French divisions and threw out of action for the critical period the whole of the British Expeditionary Force. Our Army and 120,090 French troops were indeed rescued by the British Navy from Dunkirk but only with the loss of their cannon, vehicles and modern equipment. This loss inevitably took some weeks to repair, and in the first two of those weeks the battle in France has been lost. When we consider the heroic resistance made by the French Army against heavy odds in this battle, the enormous losses inflicted upon the enemy and the evident exhaustion of the enemy, it may well be thought that these twenty-five divisions of the best-trained and best-equipped troops might have turned the scale. However, General Weygand had to fight without them. Only three British divisions or their equivalent were able to stand in the line with their French comrades. They had suffered severely, but they had fought well. We sent every man we could to France as fast as we could re-equip and transport their formations.

I am not reciting these facts for the purpose of recrimination. That I judge to be utterly futile and even harmful. We cannot afford it. I recite them in order to explain why it was we did not have, as we could have had, between twelve and fourteen British divisions fighting in the line in this great battle instead of only three. Now I put all this aside. I put it on the shelf, from which the 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. This also applies in a small way to our own affairs at home. There are many who would hold an inquest in the House of Commons on the conduct of the Governments - and of Parliaments, for they are in it, too during the years which led up to this catastrophe. They seek to indict those who were responsible for the guidance of our affairs. This also would be a foolish and pernicious process. There are too many in it. Let each man search his conscience and search his speeches. I frequently search mine. Of this I am quite sure, that if we open a quarrel between the past and the present, we shall find that we have lost the future. Therefore, I cannot accept the drawing of any distinctions between Members of the present Government. It was formed at a moment of crisis in order to unite all the parties and all sections of opinion. It has received the almost unanimous support of both Houses of Parliament. Its Members are going to stand together, and, subject to the authority of the House of Commons, we are going to govern the country and fight the war. It is absolutely necessary at a time like this that every Minister who tries each day to do his duty shall be respected; and their subordinates must know that their chiefs are not threatened men, men who are here today and gone tomorrow, but that their directions must be punctually and faithfully obeyed. Without this concentrated power we cannot face what lies before us. I should not think it would be very advantageous for the House to prolong this Debate this afternoon under conditions of public stress. Many facts are not clear that will be clear in a short time. We are to have a Secret Session on Thursday, and I should think that would be a better opportunity for the many earnest expressions of opinion which Members will desire to make and for the House to discuss vital matters without having everything read the next morning by our dangerous foes. The disastrous military events which have happened during the past fortnight have not come to me with any sense of

surprise. Indeed, I indicated a fortnight ago as clearly as I could to the House that the worst possibilities were open; and I made it perfectly clear then that whatever happened in France would make no difference to the resolve of Britain and the British Empire to fight on, 'if necessary for years, if necessary alone.' During the last few days we have successfully brought off the great majority of the troops we had on the lines of communication in France; and seven-eighths of the troops we have sent to France since the beginning of the war - that is to say, about 350,000 out of 400,000 men - are safely back in this country. Others are still fighting with the French, and fighting with considerable success in their local encounters against the enemy. We have also brought back a great mass of stores, rifles and munitions of all kinds which had been accumulated in France during the last nine months.

We have, therefore, in this island today a very large and powerful military force. This force comprises all our best-trained and our finest troops, including scores of thousands of those who have already measured their quality against the Germans and found themselves at no disadvantage. We have under arms at the present time in this island over a million and a quarter men. Behind these we have the Local Defence Volunteers, numbering half a million, only a portion of whom, however, are yet armed with rifles or other firearms. We have incorporated into our Defence Forces every man for whom we have a weapon. We expect very large additions to our weapons in the near future, and in preparation for this we intend forthwith to call up, drill and train further large numbers. Those who are not called up, or else are employed upon the vast business of munitions production in all its branches - and their ramifications are innumerable - will serve their country best by remaining at their ordinary work until they receive their summons. We have also over here Dominions armies. The Canadians had actually landed in France, but have now been safely withdrawn, much disappointed, but in perfect order, with all their artillery and equipment. And these very high-class forces from the Dominions will now take part in the defence of the Mother Country.

Lest the account which I have given of these large forces should raise the question: Why did they not take part in the great battle in France? I must make it clear that, apart from the divisions training and organising at home, only twelve divisions were equipped to fight upon a scale which justified their being sent abroad. And this was fully up to the number which the French had been led to expect would be available in France at the ninth month of the war. The rest of our forces at home have a fighting value for home defence which will, of course, steadily increase every week that passes. Thus, the invasion of Great Britain would at this time require the transportation across the sea of hostile armies on a very large scale, and after they had been so transported they would have to be continually maintained with all the masses of munitions and supplies which are required for continuous battle - as continuous battle it will surely be.

Here is where we come to the Navy - and after all, we have a Navy. Some people seem to forget that we have a Navy. We must remind them. For the last thirty years I have been concerned in discussions about the possibilities of overseas invasion, and I took the responsibility on behalf of the Admiralty, at the beginning of the last war, of allowing all regular troops to be sent out of the country. That was a very serious step to take, because our Territorials had only just been called up and were quite untrained. Therefore, this island was for several months practically denuded of fighting troops. The Admiralty had confidence at that time in their ability to prevent a mass invasion even though at that time the Germans had a magnificent battle fleet in the proportion of ten to sixteen, even though they were capable of fighting a general engagement every day and any day, whereas now they have only a couple of heavy ships worth speaking of - the *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau*. We are also told that the Italian Navy is to come out and gain sea superiority in these waters. If they seriously intend it, I shall only say that we

shall be delighted to offer Signor Mussolini a free and safeguarded passage through the Straits of Gibraltar in order that he may play the part to which he aspires. There is a general curiosity in the British Fleet to find out whether the Italians are up to the level they were at in the last war or whether they have fallen off at all.

Therefore, it seems to me that as far as sea borne invasion on a great scale is concerned we are far more capable of meeting it, today than 'we were at many periods in the last war and during the early months of this war, before our other troops were trained, and while the BEF had proceeded abroad. Now, the Navy have never pretended to be able to prevent raids by bodies of 5,000 or 10,000 men flung suddenly across and thrown ashore at several points on the coast some dark night or foggy morning. The efficacy of sea-power, especially under modern conditions, depends upon the invading force being of large size. It has to be of large size, in view of our military strength, to be of any use. If it is of large size, then, the Navy have something they can find and meet and, as it were, bite on. Now we must remember that even five divisions, however lightly equipped, would require 200 to 250 ships, and with modern air reconnaissance and photography it would not be easy to collect such an armada, marshal it and conduct it across the sea without any powerful naval forces to escort it; and there would be very great possibilities, to put it mildly, that this armada would be intercepted long before it reached the coast, and all the men drowned in the sea or, at the worst, blown to pieces with their equipment while they were trying to land. We also have a great system of mine fields, recently strongly reinforced, through which we alone know the channels. If the enemy tries to sweep passages through these mine fields, it will be the task of the Navy to destroy the minesweepers and any other forces employed to protect them. There should be no difficulty in this, owing to our great superiority at sea.

Those are the regular, well-tested, well-proved arguments on which we have relied during many years in peace and war. But the question is whether there are any new methods by which those solid assurances can be circumvented. Odd as it may seem, some attention has been given to this by the Admiralty, whose prime duty and responsibility it is to destroy any large sea borne expedition before it reaches, or at the moment when it reaches these shores. It would not be a good thing for me to go into details of this. It might suggest ideas to other people which they have not thought of; and they would not be likely to give us any of their ideas in exchange. All I will say is that untiring vigilance and mind searching must be devoted to the subject because the enemy is crafty and cunning and full of novel treacheries and stratagems. The House may be assured that the utmost ingenuity is being displayed and imagination is being evoked from large numbers of competent officers, well trained in tactics and thoroughly up to date, to measure and counter work novel possibilities. Untiring vigilance and untiring searching of the mind is being, and must be, devoted to the subject, because, remember, the enemy is crafty and there is no dirty trick he will not do.

Some people will ask why, then, was it that the British Navy was not able to prevent the movement of a large army from Germany into Norway across the Skagge Rak? But the conditions in the Channel and in the North Sea are in no way like those which prevail in the Skagge Rak. In the Skagge Rak, because of the distance, we could give no air support to our surface ships, and consequently, lying as we did close to the enemy's main air power, we were compelled to use only our submarines. We could not enforce the decisive blockade or interruption which is possible from surface vessels. Our submarines took a heavy toll but could not, by themselves, prevent the invasion of Norway. In the Channel and in the North Sea, on the other hand, our superior naval surface forces, aided by our submarines, will operate with close and effective air assistance.

This brings me, naturally, to the great question of invasion from the air, and of the impending struggle between the British and German Air Forces. It seems quite clear that no invasion on a scale beyond the capacity of our land forces to crush speedily is likely to take place from the air until our Air Force has been definitely overpowered. In the meantime, there may be raids by parachute troops and attempted descents of airborne soldiers. We should be able to give those gentry a warm reception, both in the air and on the ground, if they reach it in any condition to continue the dispute. But the great question is: Can we break Hitler's air weapon? Now, of course, it is a very great pity that we have not got an Air Force at least equal to that of the most powerful enemy within striking distance of these shores. But we have a very powerful Air Force which has proved itself far superior in quality, both in men and in many types of machine, to what we have met so far in the numerous and fierce air battles which have been fought with the Germans. In France, where we were at a considerable disadvantage and lost many machines on the ground when they were standing round the aerodromes, we were accustomed to inflict in the air losses of as much as two to two-and-a-half to one. In the fighting over Dunkirk, which was a sort of no-man's land, we undoubtedly beat the German Air Force, and gained the mastery of the local air, inflicting here a loss of three or four to one day after day. Anyone who looks at the photographs which were published a week or so ago of the re-embarkation, shows the masses of troops assembled on the beach and forming an ideal target for hours at a time, must realise that this re-embarkation would not have been possible unless the enemy had resigned all hope of recovering air superiority at that time and at that place.

In the defence of this island the advantages to the defenders will be much greater than they were in the fighting around Dunkirk. We hope to improve on the rate of three or four to one which was realised at Dunkirk; and in addition all our injured machines and their crews which get down safe - and, surprisingly, a very great many injured machines and men do get down safely in modern air fighting - all of these will fall, in an attack upon these islands, on friendly soil and live to fight another day; whereas all the injured enemy machines and their complements will be total losses as far as the war is concerned.

During the great battle in France, we gave very powerful and continuous aid to the French Army, both by fighters and bombers; but in spite of every kind of pressure we never would allow the entire metropolitan fighter strength of the Air Force to be consumed. This decision was painful, but it was also right, because the fortunes of the battle in France could not have been decisively affected even if we had thrown in our entire fighter force. That battle was lost by the unfortunate strategical opening, by the extraordinary and unforeseen power of the armoured columns and by the great preponderance of the German Army in numbers. Our fighter Air Force might easily have been exhausted as a mere accident in that great struggle, and then we should have found ourselves at the present time in a very serious plight. But as it is, I am happy to inform the House that our fighter strength is stronger at the present time relatively to the Germans, who have suffered terrible losses, than it has ever been; and consequently we believe ourselves possessed of the capacity to continue the war in the air under better conditions than we have ever experienced before. I look forward confidently to the exploits of our fighter pilots - these splendid men, this brilliant youth - who will have the glory of saving their native land, their island home, and all they love, from the most deadly of all attacks.

There remains, of course, the danger of bombing attacks, which will certainly be made very soon upon us by the bomber forces of the enemy. It is true that the German bomber force is superior in numbers to ours; but we have a very large bomber force also, which we shall use to strike at military targets in Germany without intermission. I do not

at all underrate the severity of the ordeal which lies before us; but I believe our countrymen will show themselves capable of standing up to it, like the brave men of Barcelona, and will be able to stand up to it, and carry on in spite of it, at least as well as any other people in the world. Much will depend upon this; every man and every woman will have the chance to show the finest qualities of their race, and render the highest service to their cause. For all of us, at this time, whatever our sphere, our station, our occupation or our duties, it will be a help to remember the famous lines:

He nothing common did or mean
Upon that memorable scene.

I have thought it right upon this occasion to give the House and the country some indication of the solid, practical grounds upon which we base our inflexible resolve to continue the war. There are a good many people who say, 'Never mind. Win or lose, sink or swim, better die than submit to tyranny - and such a tyranny.' And I do not dissociate myself from them. But I can assure them that our professional advisers of the three Services unitedly advise that we should carry on the war, and that there are good and reasonable hopes of final victory. We have fully informed and consulted all the self-governing Dominions, these great communities far beyond the oceans who have been built up on our laws and on our civilisation, and who are absolutely free to choose their course, but are absolutely devoted to the ancient Motherland, and who feel themselves inspired by the same emotions which lead me to stake our all upon duty and honour. We have fully consulted - them, and I have received from their Prime Ministers, Mr Mackenzie King of Canada, Mr Menzies of Australia, Mr Fraser of New Zealand, and General Smuts of South Africa that wonderful man, with his immense profound mind, and his eye watching from a distance the whole panorama of European affairs - I have received from all these eminent men, who all have Governments behind them elected on wide franchises, who are all there because they represent the will of their people, messages couched in the most moving terms in which they endorse our decision to fight on, and declare themselves ready to share our fortunes and to persevere to the end. That is what we are going to do.

We may now ask ourselves: In what way has our position worsened since the beginning of the war? It has worsened by the fact that the Germans have conquered a large part of the coastline of Western Europe, and many small countries have been overrun by them. This aggravates the possibilities of air attack and adds to our naval preoccupations. It in no way diminishes, but on the contrary definitely increases, the power of our long-distance blockade. Similarly, the entrance of Italy into the war increases the power of our long-distance blockade. We have stopped the worst leak by that. We do not know whether military resistance will come to an end in France or not, but should it do so, then of course, the Germans will be able to concentrate their forces, both military and industrial, upon us. But for the reasons I have given to the House these will not be found so easy to apply. If invasion has become more imminent, as no doubt it has, we, being relieved from the task of maintaining a large army in France, have far larger and more efficient forces to meet it.

If Hitler can bring under his despotic control the industries of the countries he has conquered, this will add greatly to his already vast armament output. On the other hand, this will not happen immediately, and we are now assured of immense, continuous and increasing support in supplies and munitions of all kinds from the United States; and especially of aeroplanes and pilots from the Dominions and across the oceans, coming from regions which are beyond the reach of enemy bombers.

I do not see how any of these factors can operate to our detriment on balance before the winter comes; and the winter will impose a strain upon the Nazi regime, with almost all Europe writhing and starving under its cruel heel, which, for all their ruthlessness, will run them very hard. We must not forget that from the moment when we declared war on the 3rd September it was always possible for Germany to turn all her air force upon this country, together with any other devices of invasion she might conceive, and that France could have done little or nothing to prevent her doing so. We have, therefore, lived under this danger, in principle and in a slightly modified form, during all these months. In the meanwhile, however, we have enormously improved our methods of defence, and we have learned, what we had no right to assume at the beginning, namely, that the individual aircraft and the individual British pilot have a sure and definite superiority. Therefore, in casting up this dread balance sheet and contemplating our dangers with a disillusioned eye, I see great reason for intense vigilance and exertion, but none whatever for panic or despair.

During the first four years of the last war the Allies experienced nothing but disaster and disappointment. That was our constant fear: one blow after another, terrible losses, frightful dangers. Everything miscarried. And yet at the end of those four years the morale of the Allies was higher than that of the Germans, who had moved from one aggressive triumph to another, and who stood everywhere triumphant invaders of the lands into which they had broken. During that war we repeatedly asked ourselves the question: How are we going to win? And no one was able ever to answer it with much precision, until at the end, quite suddenly, quite unexpectedly, our terrible foe collapsed before us, and we were so glutted with victory that in our folly we threw it away.

We do not yet know what will happen in France or whether the French resistance will be prolonged, both in France and in the French Empire overseas. The French Government will be throwing away great opportunities and casting adrift their future if they do not continue the war in accordance with their Treaty obligations, from which we have not felt able to release them. The House will have read the historic declaration in which, at the desire of many Frenchmen - and of our own hearts we have proclaimed our willingness at the darkest hour in French history to conclude a union of common citizenship in this struggle. However matters may go in France or with the French Government, or other French Governments, we in this island and in the British Empire will never lose our sense of comradeship with the French people. If we are now called upon to endure what they have been suffering, we shall emulate their courage, and if final Victory rewards our toils they shall share the gains, aye, and freedom shall be restored to all. We abate nothing of our just demands; not one jot or little do we recede. Czechs, Poles, Norwegians, Dutch, Belgians have joined their causes to our own. All these shall be restored.

What General Weygand called the Battle of France is over I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilisation. Upon it depends our own British life, and the long continuity of our institutions and our Empire. The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of pervert science. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will say, "This was their Finest Hour".

“The War of the Unknown Warriors”

14th July 1940

BBC Broadcast, London

During June and early July, the German Air Force was regrouped to open the vital first stage of "Operation Sea Lion" (the invasion of Britain) by destroying the Royal Air Force. The Battle of Britain began on July 10. During the last fortnight the British Navy, in addition to blockading what is left of the German Fleet and chasing the Italian Fleet, has had imposed upon it the sad duty of putting effectually out of action for the duration of the war the capital ships of the French Navy. These, under the Armistice terms, signed in the railway coach at Compiègne, would have been placed within the power of Nazi Germany. The transference of these ships to Hitler would have endangered the security of both Great Britain and the United States. We therefore had no choice but to act as we did, and to act forthwith. Our painful task is now complete. Although the unfinished battleship, the Jean Bart, still rests in a Moroccan harbour and there are a number of French warships at Toulon and in various French ports all over the world, these are not in a condition or of a character to derange our preponderance of naval power. As long, therefore, as they make no attempt to return to ports controlled by Germany or Italy, we shall not molest them in any way. That melancholy phase in our relations with France has, so far as we are concerned, come to an end.

Let us think rather of the future. Today is the fourteenth of July, the national festival of France. A year ago in Paris I watched the stately parade down the Champs Elysees of the French Army and the French empire. Who can foresee what the course of other years will bring? Faith is given to us to help and comfort us when we stand in awe before the unfurling scroll of human destiny. And I proclaim my faith that some of us will live to see a fourteenth of July when a liberated France will once again rejoice in her greatness and in her glory, and once again stand forward as the champion of the freedom and the rights of man. When the day dawns, as dawn it will, the soul of France will turn with comprehension and with kindness to those Frenchmen and Frenchwomen, wherever they may be, who in the darkest hour did not despair of the Republic.

In the meantime, we shall not waste our breath nor encumber our thought with reproaches. When you have a friend and comrade at whose side you have faced tremendous struggles, and your friend is smitten down by a stunning blow, it may be necessary to make sure that the weapon that has fallen from his hands shall not be added to the resources of your common enemy. But you need not bear malice because of your friend's cries of delirium and gestures of agony. You must not add to his pain; you must work for his recovery. The association of interest between Britain and France remains. The cause remains. Duty inescapable remains. So long as our pathway to victory is not impeded, we are ready to discharge such offices of good will toward the French Government as may be possible, and to foster the trade and help the administration of those parts of the great French Empire which are now cut off from captive France, but which maintain their freedom. Subject to the iron demands of the war which we are now waging against Hitler and all his works, we shall try so to conduct ourselves that every true French heart will beat and glow at the way we carry on the struggle; and that not only France, but all the oppressed countries in Europe may feel that each British victory is a step towards the liberation of the Continent from the foulest thralldom into which it has ever been cast.

All goes to show that the war will be long and hard. No one can tell where it will spread. One thing is certain: the peoples of Europe will not be ruled for long by the Nazi

Gestapo, nor will the world yield itself to Hitler's gospel of hatred, appetite and domination.

And now it has come to us to stand alone in the breach, and face the worst that the tyrant's might and enmity can do. Bearing ourselves humbly before God, but conscious that we serve an unfolding purpose, we are ready to defend our native land against the invasion by which it is threatened. We are fighting by ourselves alone; but we are not fighting for ourselves alone. Here in this strong City of Refuge which enshrines the title-deeds of human progress and is of deep consequence to Christian civilisation; here, girt about by the seas and oceans where the Navy reigns; shielded from above by the prowess and devotion of our airmen-we await undismayed the impending assault. Perhaps it will come tonight. Perhaps it will come next week. Perhaps it will never come. We must show ourselves equally capable of meeting a sudden violent shock or-what is perhaps a harder test-a prolonged vigil. But be the ordeal sharp or long, or both, we shall seek no terms, we shall tolerate no parley; we may show mercy-we shall ask for none.

I can easily understand how sympathetic onlookers across the Atlantic, or anxious friends in the yet-unravished countries of Europe, who cannot measure our resources or our resolve, may have feared for our survival when they saw so many States and kingdoms torn to pieces in a few weeks or even days by the monstrous force of the Nazi war machine. But Hitler has not yet been withstood by a great nation with a will power the equal of his own. Many of these countries have been poisoned by intrigue before they were struck down by violence. They have been rotted from within before they were smitten from without. How else can you explain what has happened to France, to the French Army, to the French people, to the leaders of the French people?

But here, in our Island, we are in good health and in good heart. We have seen how Hitler prepared in scientific detail the plans for destroying the neighbour countries of Germany. He had his plans for Poland and his plans for Norway. He had his plans for Denmark. He had his plans all worked out for the doom of the peaceful, trustful Dutch; and, of course, for the Belgians. We have seen how the French were undermined and overthrown. We may therefore be sure that there is a plan-perhaps built up over years-for destroying Great Britain, which after all has the honour to be his main and foremost enemy. All I can say is that any plan for invading Britain which Hitler made two months ago must have had to be entirely recast in order to meet our new position. Two months ago-nay, one month ago-our first and main effort was to keep our best Army in France. All our regular troops, all our output of munitions, and a very large part of our Air Force, had to be sent to France and maintained in action there. But now we have it all at home. Never before in the last war-or in this-have we had in this Island an Army comparable in quality, equipment or numbers to that which stands here on guard tonight. We have a million and a half men in the British Army under arms tonight, and every week of June and July has seen their organisation, their defences and their striking power advance by leaps and bounds. No praise is too high for the officers and men-aye, and civilians-who have made this immense transformation in so short a time. Behind these soldiers of the regular Army, as a means of destruction for parachutists, air-borne invaders, and any traitors that may be found in our midst (but I do not believe there are many-woe betide them, they will get short shrift)-behind the regular Army we have more than a million of the Local Defence Volunteers, or, as they are much better called, the "Home Guard." These officers and men, a large proportion of whom have been through the last war, have the strongest desire to attack and come to close quarters with the enemy wherever he may appear. Should the invader come to Britain, there will be no placid lying down of the people in submission before him, as we have seen, alas, in other countries. We shall defend every village, every town, and every city. The vast mass of London itself, fought street by street, could easily devour an entire hostile army; and we would rather see

London laid in ruins and ashes than that it should be tamely and abjectly enslaved. I am bound to state these facts, because it is necessary to inform our people of our intentions, and thus to reassure them.

This has been a great week for the Royal Air Force, and for the Fighter Command. They have shot down more than five to one of the German aircraft which have tried to molest our convoys in the Channel, or have ventured to cross the British coast line. These are, of course, only the preliminary encounters to the great air battles which lie ahead. But I know of no reason why we should be discontented with the results so far achieved; although, of course, we hope to improve upon them as the fighting becomes more widespread and comes more inland. Around all lies the power of the Royal Navy. With over a thousand armed ships under the White Ensign, patrolling the seas, the Navy, which is capable of transferring its force very readily to the protection of any part of the British Empire which may be threatened, is capable also of keeping open communication with the New World, from whom, as the struggle deepens, increasing aid will come. Is it not remarkable that after ten months of unlimited U-boat and air attack upon our commerce, our food reserves are higher than they have ever been, and we have a substantially larger tonnage under our own flag, apart from great numbers of foreign ships in our control, than we had at the beginning of the war?

Why do I dwell on all this? Not, surely, to induce any slackening of effort or vigilance. On the contrary. These must be redoubled, and we must prepare not only for the summer, but for the winter; not only for 1941, but for 1942; when the war will, I trust, take a different form from the defensive, in which it has hitherto been bound. I dwell on these elements in our strength, on these resources which we have mobilised and control-I dwell on them because it is right to show that the good cause can command the means of survival; and that while we toil through the dark valley we can see the sunlight on the uplands beyond.

I stand at the head of a Government representing all Parties in the State-all creeds, all classes, every recognisable section of opinion. We are ranged beneath the Crown of our ancient monarchy. We are supported by a free Parliament and a free Press; but there is one bond which unites us all and sustains us in the public regard-namely (as is increasingly becoming known), that we are prepared to proceed to all extremities, to endure them and to enforce them; that is our bond of union in His Majesty's Government tonight. Thus only, in times like these, can nations preserve their freedom; and thus only can they uphold the cause entrusted to their care.

But all depends now upon the whole life-strength of the British race in every part of the world and of all our associated peoples and of all our well-wishers in every land, doing their utmost night and day, giving all, daring all, enduring all-to the utmost-to the end. This is no war of chieftains or of princes, of dynasties or national ambition; it is a war of peoples and of causes. There are vast numbers, not only in this Island but in every land, who will render faithful service in this war, but whose names will never be known, whose deeds will never be recorded. This is a War of the Unknown Warriors; but let all strive without failing in faith or in duty, and the dark curse of Hitler will be lifted from our age.

“Never...has so much been owed by so many to so few”

House of Commons

20th August 1940

Almost a year has passed since the war began, and it is natural for us, I think, to pause on our journey at this milestone and survey the dark, wide field. It is also useful to compare the first year of this second war against German aggression with its forerunner a quarter of a century ago. Although this war is in fact only a continuation of the last, very great differences in its character are apparent. In the last war millions of men fought by hurling enormous masses of steel at one another. "Men and shells" was the cry, and prodigious slaughter was the consequence. In this war nothing of this kind has yet appeared. It is a conflict of strategy, of organization, of technical apparatus, of science, mechanics and morale. The British casualties in the first 12 months of the Great War amounted to 365,000. In this war, I am thankful to say, British killed, wounded, prisoners and missing, including civilians, do not exceed 92,000, and of these a large proportion are alive as prisoners of war. Looking more widely around, one may say that throughout all Europe, for one man killed or wounded in the first year perhaps five were killed or wounded in 1914-15.

The slaughter is only a small fraction, but the consequences to the belligerents have been even more deadly. We have seen great countries with powerful armies dashed out of coherent existence in a few weeks. We have seen the French Republic and the renowned French Army beaten into complete and total submission with less than the casualties which they suffered in any one of half a dozen of the battles of 1914-18. The entire body-it might almost seem at times the soul-of France has succumbed to physical effects incomparably less terrible than those which were sustained with fortitude and undaunted will power 25 years ago. Although up to the present the loss of life has been mercifully diminished, the decisions reached in the course of the struggle are even more profound upon the fate of nations than anything that has ever happened since barbaric times. Moves are made upon the scientific and strategic boards, advantages are gained by mechanical means, as a result of which scores of millions of men become incapable of further resistance, or judge themselves incapable of further resistance, and a fearful game of chess proceeds from check to mate by which the unhappy players seem to be inexorably bound.

There is another more obvious difference from 1914. The whole of the warring nations are engaged, not only soldiers, but the entire population, men, women and children. The fronts are everywhere. The trenches are dug in the towns and streets. Every village is fortified. Every road is barred. The front line runs through the factories. The workmen are soldiers with different weapons but the same courage. These are great and distinctive changes from what many of us saw in the struggle of a quarter of a century ago. There seems to be every reason to believe that this new kind of war is well suited to the genius and the resources of the British nation and the British Empire; and that, once we get properly equipped and properly started, a war of this kind will be more favourable to us than the sombre mass slaughters of the Somme and Passchendaele. If it is a case of the whole nation fighting and suffering together, that ought to suit us, because we are the most united of all the nations, because we entered the war upon the national will and with our eyes open, and because we have been nurtured in freedom and individual responsibility and are the products, not of totalitarian uniformity, but of tolerance and variety. If all these qualities are turned, as they are being turned, to the arts of war, we may be able to show the enemy quite a lot of things that they have not

thought of yet. Since the Germans drove the Jews out and lowered their technical standards, our science is definitely ahead of theirs. Our geographical position, the command of the sea, and the friendship of the United States enable us to draw resources from the whole world and to manufacture weapons of war of every kind, but especially of the superfine kinds, on a scale hitherto practiced only by Nazi Germany.

Hitler is now sprawled over Europe. Our offensive springs are being slowly compressed, and we must resolutely and methodically prepare ourselves for the campaigns of 1941 and 1942. Two or three years are not a long time, even in our short, precarious lives. They are nothing in the history of the nation, and when we are doing the finest thing in the world, and have the honour to be the sole champion of the liberties of all Europe, we must not grudge these years or weary as we toil and struggle through them. It does not follow that our energies in future years will be exclusively confined to defending ourselves and our possessions. Many opportunities may lie open to amphibious power, and we must be ready to take advantage of them. One of the ways to bring this war to a speedy end is to convince the enemy, not by words, but by deeds, that we have both the will and the means, not only to go on indefinitely, but to strike heavy and unexpected blows. The road to victory may not be so long as we expect. But we have no right to count upon this. Be it long or short, rough or smooth, we mean to reach our journey's end.

It is our intention to maintain and enforce a strict blockade, not only of Germany, but of Italy, France, and all the other countries that have fallen into the German power. I read in the papers that Herr Hitler has also proclaimed a strict blockade of the British Islands. No one can complain of that. I remember the Kaiser doing it in the last war. What indeed would be a matter of general complaint would be if we were to prolong the agony of all Europe by allowing food to come in to nourish the Nazis and aid their war effort, or to allow food to go in to the subjugated peoples, which certainly would be pillaged off them by their Nazi conquerors.

There have been many proposals, founded on the highest motives, that food should be allowed to pass the blockade for the relief of these populations. I regret that we must refuse these requests. The Nazis declare that they have created a new unified economy in Europe. They have repeatedly stated that they possess ample reserves of food and that they can feed their captive peoples. In a German broadcast on 27th June it was said that while Mr. Hoover's plan for relieving France, Belgium and Holland deserved commendation, the German forces had already taken the necessary steps. We know that in Norway when the German troops went in, there were food supplies to last for a year. We know that Poland, though not a rich country, usually produces sufficient food for her people. Moreover, the other countries which Herr Hitler has invaded all held considerable stocks when the Germans entered and are themselves, in many cases, very substantial food producers. If all this food is not available now, it can only be because it has been removed to feed the people of Germany and to give them increased rations-for a change-during the last few months. At this season of the year and for some months to come, there is the least chance of scarcity as the harvest has just been gathered in. The only agencies which can create famine in any part of Europe, now and during the coming winter, will be German exactions or German failure to distribute the supplies which they command.

There is another aspect. Many of the most valuable foods are essential to the manufacture of vital war material. Fats are used to make explosives. Potatoes make the alcohol for motor spirit. The plastic materials now so largely used in the construction of aircraft are made of milk. If the Germans use these commodities to help them to bomb our women and children, rather than to feed the populations who produce them, we may be sure that imported foods would go the same way, directly or indirectly, or be

employed to relieve the enemy of the responsibilities he has so wantonly assumed. Let Hitler bear his responsibilities to the full, and let the peoples of Europe who groan beneath his yoke aid in every way the coming of the day when that yoke will be broken. Meanwhile, we can and we will arrange in advance for the speedy entry of food into any part of the enslaved area, when this part has been wholly cleared of German forces, and has genuinely regained its freedom. We shall do our best to encourage the building up of reserves of food all over the world, so that there will always be held up before the eyes of the peoples of Europe, including-I say deliberately-the German and Austrian peoples, the certainty that the shattering of the Nazi power will bring to them all immediate food, freedom and peace.

Rather more than a quarter of a year has passed since the new Government came into power in this country. What a cataract of disaster has poured out upon us since then! The trustful Dutch overwhelmed; their beloved and respected Sovereign driven into exile; the peaceful city of Rotterdam the scene of a massacre as hideous and brutal as anything in the 'Thirty Years' War; Belgium invaded and beaten down; our own fine Expeditionary Force, which King Leopold called to his rescue, cut off and almost captured, escaping as it seemed only by a miracle and with the loss of all its equipment; our Ally, France, out; Italy in against us; all France in the power of the enemy, all its arsenals and vast masses of military material converted or convertible to the enemy's use; a puppet Government set up at Vichy which may at any moment be forced to become our foe; the whole western seaboard of Europe from the North Cape to the Spanish frontier in German hands; all the ports, all the airfields on this immense front employed against us as potential springboards of invasion. Moreover, the German air power, numerically so far outstripping ours, has been brought so close to our Island that what we used to dread greatly has come to pass and the hostile bombers not only reach our shores in a few minutes and from many directions, but can be escorted by their fighting aircraft. Why, Sir, if we had been confronted at the beginning of May with such a prospect, it would have seemed incredible that at the end of a period of horror and disaster, or at this point in a period of horror and disaster, we should stand erect, sure of ourselves, masters of our fate and with the conviction of final victory burning unquenchable in our hearts. Few would have believed we could survive; none would have believed that we should today not only feel stronger but should actually be stronger than we have ever been before.

Let us see what has happened on the other side of the scales. The British nation and the British Empire, finding themselves alone, stood undismayed against disaster. No one flinched or wavered; nay, some who formerly thought of peace, now think only of war. Our people are united and resolved, as they have never been before. Death and ruin have become small things compared with the shame of defeat or failure in duty. We cannot tell what lies ahead. It may be that even greater ordeals lie before us. We shall face whatever is coming to us. We are sure of ourselves and of our cause, and that is the supreme fact which has emerged in these months of trial.

Meanwhile, we have not only fortified our hearts but our Island. We have rearmed and rebuilt our armies in a degree which would have been deemed impossible a few months ago. We have ferried across the Atlantic, in the month of July, thanks to our friends over there, an immense mass of munitions of all kinds: cannon, rifles, machine guns, cartridges and shell, all safely landed without the loss of a gun or a round. The output of our own factories, working as they have never worked before, has poured forth to the troops. The whole British Army is at home. More than 2,000,000 determined men have rifles and bayonets in their hands tonight, and three-quarters of them are in regular military formations. We have never had armies like this in our Island in time of war. The whole Island bristles against invaders, from the sea or from the air. As I

explained to the House in the middle of June, the stronger our Army at home, the larger must the invading expedition be, and the larger the invading expedition, the less difficult will be the task of the Navy in detecting its assembly and in intercepting and destroying it in passage; and the greater also would be the difficulty of feeding and supplying the invaders if ever they landed, in the teeth of continuous naval and air attack on their communications. All this is classical and venerable doctrine. As in Nelson's day, the maxim holds, "Our first line of defence is the enemy's ports." Now air reconnaissance and photography have brought to an old principle a new and potent aid.

Our Navy is far stronger than it was at the beginning of the war. The great flow of new construction set on foot at the outbreak is now beginning to come in. We hope our friends across the ocean will send us a timely reinforcement to bridge the gap between the peace flotillas of 1939 and the war flotillas of 1941. There is no difficulty in sending such aid. The seas and oceans are open. The U-boats are contained. The magnetic mine is, up to the present time, effectively mastered. The merchant tonnage under the British flag, after a year of unlimited U-boat war, after eight months of intensive mining attack, is larger than when we began. We have, in addition, under our control at least 4,000,000 tons of shipping from the captive countries which has taken refuge here or in the harbours of the Empire. Our stocks of food of all kinds are far more abundant than in the days of peace, and a large and growing program of food production is on foot.

Why do I say all this? Not, assuredly, to boast; not, assuredly, to give the slightest countenance to complacency. The dangers we face are still enormous, but so are our advantages and resources. I recount them because the people have a right to know that there are solid grounds for the confidence which we feel, and that we have good reason to believe ourselves capable, as I said in a very dark hour two months ago, of continuing the war "if necessary alone, if necessary for years." I say it also because the fact that the British Empire stands invincible, and that Nazidom is still being resisted, will kindle again the spark of hope in the breasts of hundreds of millions of down-trodden or despairing men and women throughout Europe, and far beyond its bounds, and that from these sparks there will presently come cleansing and devouring flame.

The great air battle which has been in progress over this Island for the last few weeks has recently attained a high intensity. It is too soon to attempt to assign limits either to its scale or to its duration. We must certainly expect that greater efforts will be made by the enemy than any he has so far put forth. Hostile air fields are still being developed in France and the Low Countries, and the movement of squadrons and material for attacking us is still proceeding. It is quite plain that Herr Hitler could not admit defeat in his air attack on Great Britain without sustaining most serious injury. If after all his boastings and bloodcurdling threats and lurid accounts trumpeted round the world of the damage he has inflicted, of the vast numbers of our Air Force he has shot down, so he says, with so little loss to himself; if after tales of the panic-stricken British crushed in their holes cursing the plutocratic Parliament which has led them to such a plight-if after all this his whole air onslaught were forced after a while tamely to peter out, the Fuhrer's reputation for veracity of statement might be seriously impugned. We may be sure, therefore, that he will continue as long as he has the strength to do so, and as long as any preoccupations he may have in respect of the Russian Air Force allow him to do so.

On the other hand, the conditions and course of the fighting have so far been favourable to us. I told the House two months ago that, whereas in France our fighter aircraft were wont to inflict a loss of two or three to one upon the Germans, and in the fighting at Dunkirk, which was a kind of no-man's-land, a loss of about three or four to one, we expected that in an attack on this Island we should achieve a larger ratio. This

has certainly come true. It must also be remembered that all the enemy machines and pilots which are shot down over our Island, or over the seas which surround it, are either destroyed or captured; whereas a considerable proportion of our machines, and also of our pilots, are saved, and soon again in many cases come into action.

A vast and admirable system of salvage, directed by the Ministry of Aircraft Production, ensures the speediest return to the fighting line of damaged machines, and the most provident and speedy use of all the spare parts and material. At the same time the splendid nay, astounding-increase in the output and repair of British aircraft and engines which Lord Beaverbrook has achieved by a genius of organization and drive, which looks like magic, has given us overflowing reserves of every type of aircraft, and an ever-mounting stream of production both in quantity and quality. The enemy is, of course, far more numerous than we are. But our new production already, as I am advised, largely exceeds his, and the American production is only just beginning to flow in. It is a fact, as I see from my daily returns, that our bomber and fighter strength now, after all this fighting, are larger than they have ever been. We believe that we shall be able to continue the air struggle indefinitely and as long as the enemy pleases, and the longer it continues the more rapid will be our approach, first towards that parity, and then into that superiority, in the air upon which in a large measure the decision of the war depends.

The gratitude of every home in our Island, in our Empire, and indeed throughout the world, except in the abodes of the guilty, goes out to the British airmen who, undaunted by odds, unwearied in their constant challenge and mortal danger, are turning the tide of the World War by their prowess and by their devotion. Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few. All hearts go out to the fighter pilots, whose brilliant actions we see with our own eyes day after day; but we must never forget that all the time, night after night, month after month, our bomber squadrons travel far into Germany, find their targets in the darkness by the highest navigational skill, aim their attacks, often under the heaviest fire, often with serious loss, with deliberate careful discrimination, and inflict shattering blows upon the whole of the technical and war-making structure of the Nazi power. On no part of the Royal Air Force does the weight of the war fall more heavily than on the daylight bombers, who will play an invaluable part in the case of invasion and whose unflinching zeal it has been necessary in the meanwhile on numerous occasions to restrain.

We are able to verify the results of bombing military targets in Germany, not only by reports which reach us through many sources, but also, of course, by photography. I have no hesitation in saying that this process of bombing the military industries and communications of Germany and the air bases and storage depots from which we are attacked, which process will continue upon an ever-increasing scale until the end of the war, and may in another year attain dimensions hitherto undreamed of, affords one at least of the most certain, if not the shortest, of all the roads to victory. Even if the Nazi legions stood triumphant on the Black Sea, or indeed upon the Caspian, even if Hitler was at the gates of India, it would profit him nothing if at the same time the entire economic and scientific apparatus of German war power lay shattered and pulverized at home.

The fact that the invasion of this Island upon a large scale has become a far more difficult operation with every week that has passed since we saved our Army at Dunkirk, and our very great preponderance of sea power enable us to turn our eyes and to turn our strength increasingly towards the Mediterranean and against that other enemy who, without the slightest provocation, coldly and deliberately, for greed and gain, stabbed France in the back in the moment of her agony, and is now marching against us in Africa. The defection of France has, of course, been deeply damaging to our position in

what is called, somewhat oddly, the Middle East. In the defence of Somaliland, for instance, we had counted upon strong French forces attacking the Italians from Jibuti. We had counted also upon the use of the French naval and air bases in the Mediterranean, and particularly upon the North African shore. We had counted upon the French Fleet. Even though metropolitan France was temporarily overrun, there was no reason why the French Navy, substantial parts of the French Army, the French Air Force and the French Empire overseas should not have continued the struggle at our side.

Shielded by overwhelming sea power, possessed of invaluable strategic bases and of ample funds, France might have remained one of the great combatants in the struggle. By so doing, France would have preserved the continuity of her life, and the French Empire might have advanced with the British Empire to the rescue of the independence and integrity of the French Motherland. In our own case, if we had been put in the terrible position of France, a contingency now happily impossible, although, of course, it would have been the duty of all war leaders to fight on here to the end, it would also have been their duty, as I indicated in my speech of 4th June, to provide as far as possible for the Naval security of Canada and our Dominions and to make sure they had the means to carry on the struggle from beyond the oceans. Most of the other countries that have been overrun by Germany for the time being have persevered valiantly and faithfully. The Czechs, the Poles, the Norwegians, the Dutch, the Belgians are still in the field, sword in hand, recognized by Great Britain and the United States as the sole representative authorities and lawful Governments of their respective States.

That France alone should lie prostrate at this moment is the crime, not of a great and noble nation, but of what are called "the men of Vichy." We have profound sympathy with the French people. Our old comradeship with France is not dead. In General de Gaulle and his gallant band, that comradeship takes an effective form. These free Frenchmen have been condemned to death by Vichy, but the day will come, as surely as the sun will rise tomorrow, when their names will be held in honour, and their names will be graven in stone in the streets and villages of a France restored in a liberated Europe to its full freedom and its ancient fame. But this conviction which I feel of the future cannot affect the immediate problems which confront us in the Mediterranean and in Africa. It had been decided some time before the beginning of the war not to defend the Protectorate of Somaliland. That policy was changed in the early months of the war. When the French gave in, and when our small forces there, a few battalions, a few guns, were attacked by all the Italian troops, nearly two divisions, which had formerly faced the French at Jibuti, it was right to withdraw our detachments, virtually intact, for action elsewhere. Far larger operations no doubt impend in the Middle East theatre, and I shall certainly not attempt to discuss or prophesy about their probable course. We have large armies and many means of reinforcing them. We have the complete sea command of the eastern Mediterranean. We intend to do our best to give a good account of ourselves, and to discharge faithfully and resolutely all our obligations and duties in that quarter of the world. More than that I do not think the House would wish me to say at the present time.

A good many people have written to me to ask me to make on this occasion a fuller statement of our war aims, and of the kind of peace we wish to make after the war, than is contained in the very considerable declaration which was made early in the autumn. Since then we have made common cause with Norway, Holland and Belgium. We have recognized the Czech Government of Dr. Beneš, and we have told General de Gaulle that our success will carry with it the restoration of France. I do not think it would be wise at this moment, while the battle rages and the war is still perhaps only in its earlier stage, to embark upon elaborate speculations about the future shape which

should be given to Europe or the new securities which must be arranged to spare mankind the miseries of a third World War. The ground is not new, it has been frequently traversed and explored, and many ideas are held about it in common by all good men, and all free men. But before we can undertake the task of rebuilding we have not only to be convinced ourselves, but we have to convince all other countries that the Nazi tyranny is going to be finally broken. The right to guide

The course of world history is the noblest prize of victory. We are still toiling up the hill; we have not yet reached the crest-line of it; we cannot survey the landscape or even imagine what its condition will be when that longed-for morning comes. The task which lies before us immediately is at once more practical, more simple and more stern. I hope-indeed, I pray-that we shall not be found unworthy of our victory if after toil and tribulation it is granted to us. For the rest, we have to gain the victory. That is our task.

There is, however, one direction in which we can see a little more clearly ahead. We have to think not only for ourselves but for the lasting security of the cause and principles for which we are fighting and of the long future of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Some months ago we came to the conclusion that the interests of the United States and of the British Empire both required that the United States should have facilities for the naval and air defence of the Western Hemisphere against the attack of a Nazi power which might have acquired temporary but lengthy control of a large part of Western Europe and its formidable resources. We had therefore decided spontaneously, and without being asked or offered any inducement, to inform the Government of the United States that we would be glad to place such defence facilities at their disposal by leasing suitable sites in our Transatlantic possessions for their greater security against the unmeasured dangers of the future. The principle of association of interests for common purposes between Great Britain and the United States had developed even before the war. Various agreements had been reached about certain small islands in the Pacific Ocean which had become important as air fuelling points. In all this line of thought we found ourselves in very close harmony with the Government of Canada.

Presently we learned that anxiety was also felt in the United States about the air and naval defence of their Atlantic seaboard, and President Roosevelt has recently made it clear that he would like to discuss with us, and with the Dominion of Canada and with Newfoundland, the development of American naval and air facilities in Newfoundland and in the West Indies. There is, of course, no question of any transference of sovereignty-that has never been suggested-or of any action being taken without the consent or against the wishes of the various Colonies concerned; but for our part, His Majesty's Government are entirely willing to accord defence facilities to the United States on a 99 years' leasehold basis, and we feel sure that our interests no less than theirs, and the interests of the Colonies themselves and of Canada and Newfoundland, will be served thereby. These are important steps. Undoubtedly this process means that these two great organizations of the English-speaking democracies, the British Empire and the United States, will have to be somewhat mixed up together in some of their affairs for mutual and general one can stop it. Like the Mississippi, it just keeps rolling alone. Let it roll. Let it roll on full flood, view the process with any misgivings. I could not stop it if I wished; no one can stop it. Like the Mississippi, it just keeps rolling along. Let it roll. Let it roll on full flood, inexorable, irresistible, and benignant, to broader lands and better days.

"Westward, Look, the Land is Bright"

Broadcast

27th April 1941

I was asked last week whether I was aware of some uneasiness which it was said existed in the country on account of the gravity, as it was described, of the war situation. So I thought it would be a good thing to go and see for myself what this "uneasiness" amounted to, and I went to some of our great cities and seaports which had been most heavily bombed, and to some of the places where the poorest people had got it worst. I have come back not only reassured, but refreshed. To leave the offices in Whitehall with their ceaseless hum of activity and stress, and go out to the front, by which I mean the streets and wharves of London or Liverpool, Manchester, Cardiff, Swansea or Bristol, is like going out of a hothouse on to the bridge of a fighting ship. It is a tonic which I should recommend any who are suffering from fretfulness to take in strong doses when they have need of it.

It is quite true that I have seen many painful scenes of havoc, and of fine buildings and acres of cottage homes blasted into rubble-heaps of ruin. But it is just in those very places where the malice of the savage enemy has done its worst, and where the ordeal of the men, women and children has been most severe, that I found their morale most high and splendid. Indeed, I felt encompassed by an exaltation of spirit in the people which seemed to lift mankind and its troubles above the level of material facts into that joyous serenity we think belongs to a better world than this.

Of their kindness to me I cannot speak, because I have never sought it or dreamed of it, and can never deserve it. I can only assure you that I and my colleagues, or comrades rather - for that is what they are - will toil with every scrap of life and strength, according to the lights that are granted to us, not to fail these people or be wholly unworthy of their faithful and generous regard. The British nation is stirred and moved as it has never been at any time in its long, eventful, famous history, and it is no hackneyed trope of speech to say that they mean to conquer or to die.

What a triumph the life of these battered cities is, over the worst that fire and bomb can do. What a vindication of the civilized and decent way of living we have been trying to work for and work towards in our Island. What a proof of the virtues of free institutions. What a test of the quality of our local authorities, and of institutions and customs and societies so steadily built. This ordeal by fire has even in a certain sense exhilarated the manhood and womanhood of Britain. The sublime but also terrible and sombre experiences and emotions of the battlefield which for centuries had been reserved for the soldiers and sailors, are now shared, for good or ill, by the entire population. All are proud to be under the fire of the enemy. Old men, little children, the crippled veterans of former wars, aged women, the ordinary hard-pressed citizen or subject of the King, as he likes to call himself, the sturdy workmen who swing the hammers or load the ships; skilful craftsmen; the members of every kind of A.R.P. service, are proud to feel that they stand in the line together with our fighting men, when one of the greatest of causes is being fought out, as fought out it will be, to the end. This is indeed the grand heroic period of our history, and the light of glory shines on all.

You may imagine how deeply I feel my own responsibility to all these people; my responsibility to bear my part in bringing them safely out of this long, stern, scowling valley through which we are marching, and not to demand from them the sacrifices and exertions in vain.

I have thought in this difficult period, when so much fighting and so many critical and complicated manoeuvres are going on, that it is above all things important that our policy and conduct should be upon the highest level, and that honour should be our guide. Very few people realize how small were the forces with which General Wavell, that fine Commander whom we cheered in good days and will back through bad - how small were the forces which took the bulk of the Italian masses in Libya prisoners. In none of his successive victories could General Wavell maintain in the desert or bring into action more than two divisions, or about 30,000 men. When we reached Benghazi, and what was left of Mussolini's legions scurried back along the dusty road to Tripoli, a call was made upon us which we could not resist. Let me tell you about that call.

You will remember how in November the Italian Dictator fell upon the unoffending Greeks, and without reason and without warning invaded their country, and how the Greek nation, reviving their classic fame, hurled his armies back at the double-quick. Meanwhile Hitler, who had been creeping and worming his way steadily forward, doping and poisoning and pinioning, one after the other Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria, suddenly made it clear that he would come to the rescue of his fellow-criminal. The lack of unity among the Balkan States had enabled him to build up a mighty army in their midst. While nearly all the Greek troops were busy beating the Italians, the tremendous German military machine suddenly towered up on their other frontier. In their mortal peril the Greeks turned to us for succour. Strained as were our own resources, we could not say them nay. By solemn guarantee given before the war, Great Britain had promised them her help. They declared they would fight for their native soil even if neither of their neighbours made common cause with them, and even if we left them to their fate. But we could not do that. There are rules against that kind of thing; and to break those rules would be fatal to the honour of the British Empire, without which we could neither hope nor deserve to win this hard war. Military defeat or miscalculation can be redeemed. The fortunes of war are fickle and changing. But an act of shame would deprive us of the respect which we now enjoy throughout the world, and this would sap the vitals of our strength.

During the last year we have gained by our bearing and conduct a potent hold upon the sentiments of the people of the United States. Never, never in our history, have we been held in such admiration and regard across the Atlantic Ocean. In that great Republic, now in much travail and stress of soul, it is customary to use all the many valid, solid arguments about American interests and American safety, which depend upon the destruction of Hitler and his foul gang and even fouler doctrines. But in the long run - believe me, for I know - the action of the United States will be dictated, not by methodical calculations of profit and loss, but by moral sentiment, and by that gleaming flash of resolve which lifts the hearts of men and nations, and springs from the spiritual foundations of human life itself.

We, for our part, were of course bound to hearken to the Greek appeal to the utmost limit of our strength. We put the case to the Dominions of Australia and New Zealand, and their Governments, without in any way ignoring the hazards, told us that they felt the same as we did. So an important part of the mobile portion of the Army of the Nile was sent to Greece in fulfilment of our pledge. It happened that the divisions available and best suited to this task were from New Zealand and Australia, and that only about half the troops who took part in this dangerous expedition came from the Mother Country. I see the German propaganda is trying to make bad blood between us and Australia by making out that we have used them to do what we would not have asked of the British Army. I shall leave it to Australia to deal with that taunt. Let us see what has happened. We knew, of course, that the forces we could send to Greece would not by themselves alone be sufficient to stem the German tide of invasion. But there was a very

real hope that the neighbours of Greece would by our intervention be drawn to stand in line together with her while time remained. How nearly that came off will be known some day. The tragedy of Yugoslavia has been that these brave people had a government who hoped to purchase an ignoble immunity by submission to the Nazi will. Thus when at last the people of Yugoslavia found out where they were being taken, and rose in one spontaneous surge of revolt, they saved the soul and future of their country: but it was already too late to save its territory. They had no time to mobilize their armies. They were struck down by the ruthless and highly mechanized Hun before they could even bring their armies into the field. Great disasters have occurred in the Balkans. Yugoslavia has been beaten down. Only in the mountains can she continue her resistance. The Greeks have been overwhelmed. Their victorious Albanian army has been cut off and forced to surrender, and it has been left to the Anzacs and their British comrades to fight their way back to the sea, leaving their mark on all who hindered them.

I turn aside from the stony path we have to tread, to indulge a moment of lighter relief. I daresay you have read in the newspapers that, by a special proclamation, the Italian Dictator has congratulated the Italian army in Albania on the glorious laurels they have gained by their victory over the Greeks. Here surely is the world's record in the domain of the ridiculous and the contemptible. This whipped jackal, Mussolini, who to save his own skin has made all Italy a vassal state of Hitler's Empire, comes frisking up at the side of the German tiger with yelpings not only of appetite - that can be understood - but even of triumph. Different things strike different people in different ways. But I am sure there are a great many millions in the British Empire and in the United States, who will find a new object in life in making sure that we come to the final reckoning this absurd impostor will be abandoned to public justice and universal scorn.

While these grievous events were taking place in the Balkan Peninsula and in Greece, our forces in Libya have sustained a vexatious and damaging defeat. The Germans advanced sooner and in greater strength than we or our Generals expected. The bulk of our armoured troops, which had played such a decisive part in beating the Italians, had to be refitted, and the single armoured brigade which had been judged sufficient to hold the frontier till about the middle of May was worsted and its vehicles largely destroyed by a somewhat stronger German armoured force. Our infantry, which had not exceeded one division, had to fall back upon the very large Imperial armies that have been assembled and can be nourished and maintained in the fertile delta of the Nile.

Tobruk - the fortress of Tobruk - which flanks any German advance on Egypt, we hold strongly. There we have repulsed many attacks, causing the enemy heavy losses and taking many prisoners. That is how the matter stands in Egypt and on the Libyan front.

We must now expect the war in the Mediterranean on the sea, in the desert, and above all in the air, to become very fierce, varied and widespread. We had cleared the Italians out of Cyrenaica, and it now lies with us to purge that province of the Germans. That will be a harder task, and we cannot expect to do it at once. You know I never try to make out that defeats are victories. I have never underrated the German as a warrior. Indeed I told you a month ago that the swift, unbroken course of victories which we had gained over the Italians could not possibly continue, and that misfortunes must be expected. There is only one thing certain about war, that it is full of disappointments and also full of mistakes. It remains to be seen, however, whether it is the Germans who have made the mistake in trampling down the Balkan States and in making a river of blood and hate between themselves and the Greek and Yugoslav peoples. It remains also to be seen whether they have made a mistake in their attempt to invade Egypt with the forces and means of supply which they have now got. Taught by experience, I make it a rule not to prophesy about battles which have yet to be fought out. This, however, I will venture

to say, that I should be very sorry to see the tasks of the combatants in the Middle East exchanged, and that General Wavell's armies should be in the position of the German invaders. That is only a personal opinion, and I can well understand you may take a different view. It is certain that fresh dangers besides those which threaten Egypt may come upon us in the Mediterranean. The war may spread to Spain and Morocco. It may spread eastward to Turkey and Russia. The Huns may lay their hands for a time upon the granaries of the Ukraine and the oil-wells of the Caucasus. They may dominate the Black Sea. They may dominate the Caspian. Who can tell? We shall do our best to meet them and fight them wherever they go. But there is one thing which is certain. There is one thing which rises out of the vast welter which is sure and solid, and which no one in his senses can mistake. Hitler cannot find safety from avenging justice in the East, in the Middle East, or in the Far East. In order to win this war, he must either conquer this Island by invasion, or he must cut the ocean life-line which joins us to the United States.

Let us look into these alternatives, if you will bear with me for a few minutes longer. When I spoke to you last, early in February, many people believed the Nazi boastings that the invasion of Britain was about to begin. It has not begun yet, and with every week that passes we grow stronger on the sea, in the air, and in the numbers, quality, training and equipment of the great Armies that now guard our Island. When I compare the position at home as it is today with what it was in the summer of last year, even after making allowance for a much more elaborate mechanical preparation on the part of the enemy, I feel that we have very much to be thankful for, and I believe that provided our exertions and our vigilance are not relaxed even for a moment, we may be confident that we shall give a very good account of ourselves. More than that it would be boastful to say. Less than that it would be foolish to believe.

But how about our life-line across the Atlantic? What is to happen if so many four merchant ships are sunk that we cannot bring in the food we need to nourish our brave people? What if the supplies of war materials and war weapons which the United States are seeking to send us in such enormous quantities should in large part be sunk on the way? What is to happen then? In February, as you may remember, that bad man in one of his raving outbursts threatened us with a terrifying increase in the numbers and activities of his U-boats and in his air-attack - not only on our Island but, thanks to his use of French and Norwegian harbours, and thanks to the denial to us of the Irish bases - upon our shipping far out into the Atlantic. We have taken and are taking all possible measures to meet this deadly attack, and we are now fighting against it with might and main. That is what is called the Battle of the Atlantic, which in order to survive we have got to win on salt water just as decisively as we had to win the Battle of Britain last August and September in the air.

Wonderful exertions have been made by our Navy and Air Force; by the hundreds of mine-sweeping vessels which with their marvellous appliances keep our ports clear in spite of all the enemy can do; by the men who build and repair our immense fleets of merchant ships; by the men who load and unload them; and need I say by the officers and men of the Merchant Navy who go out in all weathers and in the teeth of all dangers to fight for the life of their native land and for a cause they comprehend and serve. Still, when you think how easy it is to sink ships at sea and how hard it is to build them and protect them, and when you remember that we have never less than two thousand ships afloat and three or four hundred in the danger zone; when you think of the great armies we are maintaining and reinforcing in the East, and of the worldwide traffic we have to carry on - when you remember all this, can you wonder that it is the Battle of the Atlantic which holds the first place in the thoughts of those upon whom rests the responsibility for procuring the victory?

It was therefore with indescribable relief that I learned of the tremendous decisions lately taken by the President and people of the United States. The American Fleet and flying boats have been ordered to patrol the wide waters of the Western Hemisphere, and to warn the peaceful shipping of all nations outside the combat zone of the presence of lurking U-boats or raiding cruisers belonging to the two aggressor nations. We British shall therefore be able to concentrate our protecting forces far more upon the routes nearer home, and to take a far heavier toll of the U-boats there. I have felt for some time that something like this was bound to happen. The President and Congress of the United States, having newly fortified themselves by contact with their electors, have solemnly pledged their aid to Britain in this war because they deem our cause just, and because they know their own interests and safety would be endangered if we were destroyed. They are taxing themselves heavily. They have passed great legislation. They have turned a large part of their gigantic industry to making the munitions which we need. They have even given us or lent us valuable weapons of their own. I could not believe that they would allow the high purposes to which they have set themselves to be frustrated and the products of their skill and labour sunk to the bottom of the sea. U-boat warfare as conducted by Germany is entirely contrary to international agreements freely subscribed to by Germany only a few years ago. There is no effective blockade, but only a merciless murder and marauding over wide, indiscriminate areas utterly beyond the control of the German sea-power. When I said ten weeks ago: "Give us the tools and we will finish the job", I meant, *give* them to us: put them within our reach - and that is what it now seems the Americans are going to do. And that is why I feel a very strong conviction that though the Battle of the Atlantic will be long and hard, and its issue is by no means yet determined, it has entered upon a more grim but at the same time a far more favourable phase. When you come to think of it, the United States are very closely bound up with us now, and have engaged themselves deeply in giving us moral, material, and, within the limits I have mentioned, naval support.

It is worth while therefore to take a look on both sides of the ocean at the forces which are facing each other in this awful struggle, from which there can be no drawing back. No prudent and far-seeing man can doubt that the eventual and total defeat of Hitler and Mussolini is certain, in view of the respective declared resolves of the British and American democracies. There are less than seventy million malignant Huns - some of whom are curable and others killable - many of whom are already engaged in holding down Austrians, Czechs, Poles, French, and the many other ancient races they now bully and pillage. The peoples of the British Empire and of the United States number nearly two hundred millions in their homelands and in the British Dominions alone. They possess the unchallengeable command of the oceans, and will soon obtain decisive superiority in the air. They have more wealth, more technical resources, and they make more steel, than the whole of the rest of the world put together. They are determined that the cause of freedom shall not be trampled down, nor the tide of world progress turned backwards, by the criminal Dictators.

While therefore we naturally view with sorrow and anxiety much that is happening in Europe and in Africa, and may happen in Asia, we must not lose our sense of proportion and thus become discouraged or alarmed. When we face with a steady eye the difficulties which lie before us, we may derive new confidence from remembering those we have already overcome. Nothing that is happening now is comparable in gravity with the dangers through which we passed last year. Nothing that can happen in the East is comparable with what is happening in the West.

Last time I spoke to you I quoted the lines of Longfellow which President Roosevelt had written out for me in his own hand. I have some other lines which are less well known but which seem apt and appropriate to our fortunes tonight, and I believe

they will be so judged wherever the English language is spoken or the flag of freedom flies:

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light;
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly!
But westward, look, the land is bright.

“The Fourth Climacteric”

Broadcast

22nd June 1941

I have taken occasion to speak to you tonight because we have reached one of the climacterics of the war. In the first of these intense turning points, a year ago, France fell prostrate under the German hammer and we had to face the storm alone. The second was when the Royal Air Force beat the Hun raiders out of the daylight air raid and thus warded off the Nazi invasion of our islands while we were still ill-armed and ill-prepared. The third turning point was when the President and Congress of the United States passed the lease and lend enactment, devoting nearly 2,000,000,000 sterling of the wealth of the New World to help us defend our liberties and their own. Those were the three climacterics. The fourth is now upon us.

At 4 o'clock this morning Hitler attacked and invaded Russia. All his usual formalities of perfidy were observed with scrupulous technique. A non-aggression treaty had been solemnly signed and was in force between the two countries. No complaint had been made by Germany of its non-fulfillment. Under its cloak of false confidence the German armies drew up in immense strength along a line which stretched from the White Sea to the Black Sea and their air fleets and armoured divisions slowly and methodically took up their stations. Then, suddenly, without declaration of war, without even an ultimatum, the German bombs rained down from the sky upon the Russian cities; the German troops violated the Russian frontiers and an hour later the German Ambassador, who till the night before was lavishing his assurances of friendship, almost of alliance, upon the Russians, called upon the Russian Foreign Minister to tell him that a state of war existed between Germany and Russia.

Thus was repeated on a far larger scale the same kind of outrage against every form of signed compact and international faith which we have witnessed in Norway, in Denmark, in Holland, in Belgium and which Hitler's accomplice and jackal, Mussolini, so faithfully imitated in the case of Greece.

All this was no surprise to me. In fact I gave clear and precise warnings to Stalin of what was coming. I gave him warnings, as I have given warnings to others before. I can only hope that these warnings did not fall unheeded. All we know at present is that the Russian people are defending their native soil and that their leaders have called upon them to resist to the utmost.

Hitler is a monster of wickedness, insatiable in his lust for blood and plunder. Not content with having all Europe under his heel or else terrorized into various forms of abject submission, he must now carry his work of butchery and desolation among the vast multitudes of Russia and of Asia. The terrible military machine which we and the rest of the civilized world so foolishly, so supinely, so insensately allowed the Nazi gangsters to build up year by year from almost nothing-this machine cannot stand idle, lest it rust or fall to pieces. It must be in continual motion, grinding up human lives and trampling down the homes and the rights of hundreds of millions of men. Moreover, it must be fed not only with flesh but with oil.

So now this bloodthirsty guttersnipe must launch his mechanized armies upon new fields of slaughter, pillage and devastation. Poor as are the Russian peasants, workmen and soldiers, he must steal from them their daily bread. He must devour their harvests. He must rob them of the oil which drives their ploughs and thus produce a famine without example in human history. And even the carnage and ruin which his victory, should he gain it-though he's not gained it yet-will bring upon the Russian people, will itself be only a stepping stone to the attempt to plunge four or five hundred

millions who live in China and the 350,000,000 who live in India into that bottomless pit of human degradation over which the diabolic emblem of the swastika flaunts itself. It is not too much to say here this pleasant summer evening that the lives and happiness of a thousand million additional human beings are now menaced with brutal Nazi violence. That is enough to make us hold our breath. But presently I shall show you something else that lies behind and something that touches very nearly the life of Britain and of the United States.

The Nazi regime is indistinguishable from the worst features of Communism. It is devoid of all theme and principle except appetite and racial domination. It excels in all forms of human wickedness, in the efficiency of its cruelty and ferocious aggression. Noone has been a more consistent opponent of Communism than I have for the last twenty-five years. I will unsay no words that I've spoken about it. But all this fades away before the spectacle which is now unfolding. The past, with its crimes, its follies and its tragedies, flashes away. I see the Russian soldiers standing on the threshold of their native land, guarding the fields which their fathers have tilled from time immemorial. I see them guarding their homes; their mothers and wives pray, ah yes, for there are times when all pray for the safety of their loved ones, for the return of the breadwinner, of the champion, of their protectors. I see the 10,000 villages of Russia, where the means of existence was wrung so hardly from the soil, but where there are still primordial human joys, where maidens laugh and children play I see advancing upon all this, in hideous onslaught, the Nazi war machine, with its clanking, heel-clicking, dandified Prussian officers, its crafty expert agents, fresh from the cowing and tying down of a dozen countries. I see also the dull, drilled, docile brutish masses of the Hun soldiery, plodding on like a swarm of crawling locusts. I see the German bombers and fighters in the sky, still smarting from many a British whipping, so delighted to find what they believe is an easier and a safer prey.

Behind all this glare, behind all this storm, I see that small group of villainous men who planned, organized and launched this cataract of horrors upon mankind. And then my mind goes back across the years to the days when the Russian armies were our Allies against the same deadly foe when they fought with so much valour and constancy and helped to gain a victory, from all share in which, alas, they were, through no fault of ours, utterly cut off. I have lived through all this and you will pardon me if I express my feelings and the stir of old memories.

But now I have to declare the decision of His Majesty's Government, and I feel sure it is a decision in which the great Dominions will, in due course, concur. And that we must speak of now, at once, without a day's delay. I have to make the declaration, but can you doubt what our policy will be? We have but one aim and one single irrevocable purpose. We are resolved to destroy Hitler and every vestige of the Nazi regime. From this nothing will turn us. Nothing. We will never parley; we will never negotiate with Hitler or any of his gang. We shall fight him by land; we shall fight him by sea; we shall fight him in the air, until, with God's help, we have rid the earth of his shadow and liberated its people from his yoke. Any man or State who fights against Nazism will have our aid. Any man or State who marches with Hitler is our foe. This applies not only to organized States but to all representatives of that vile race of Quislings who make themselves the tools and agents of the Nazi regime against their fellow-countrymen and against the lands of their births. These Quislings, like the Nazi leaders themselves, if not disposed of by their fellow-countrymen, which would save trouble, will be delivered by us on the morrow of victory to the justice of the Allied tribunals. That is our policy and that is our declaration. It follows, therefore, that we shall give whatever help we can to Russia and to the Russian people. We shall appeal to

all our friends and Allies in every part of the world to take the same course and pursue it as we shall, faithfully and steadfastly to the end.

We have offered to the Government of Soviet Russia any technical or economic assistance which is in our power and which is likely to be of service to them. We shall bomb Germany by day as well as by night in ever-increasing measure, casting upon them month by month a heavier discharge of bombs and making the German people taste and gulp each month a sharper dose of the miseries they have showered upon mankind. It is noteworthy that only yesterday the Royal Air Force, striking inland over France, cut down with very small loss to themselves twenty-eight of the Hun fighting machines in the air above the French soil they have invaded, defiled and profess to hold. But this is only a beginning. From now henceforward the main expansion of our air force proceeds with gathering speed. In another six months the weight of the help we are receiving from the United States in war materials of all kinds, especially in heavy bombers, will begin to tell.

This is no class war. It is a war in which the whole British Empire and Commonwealth of Nations is engaged without distinction of race, creed or party. It is not for me to speak of the action of the United States, but this I will say: If Hitler imagines that his attack on Soviet Russia will cause the slightest division of aims or slackening of effort in the great democracies, who are resolved upon his doom, he is woefully mistaken. On the contrary, we shall be fortified and encouraged in our efforts to rescue mankind from his tyranny. We shall be strengthened and not weakened in our determination and in our resources.

This is no time to moralize upon the follies of countries and governments which have allowed themselves to be struck down one by one when by united action they could so easily have saved themselves and saved the world from this catastrophe. But, when I spoke a few minutes ago of Hitler's bloodlust and the hateful appetites which have impelled or lured him on his Russian adventure, I said there was one deeper motive behind his outrage. He wishes to destroy the Russian power because he hopes that if he succeeds in this he will be able to bring back the main strength of his army and air force from the East and hurl it upon this island, which he knows he must conquer or suffer the penalty of his crimes. His invasion of Russia is no more than a prelude to an attempted invasion of the British Isles. He hopes, no doubt, that all this may be accomplished before the Winter comes and that he can overwhelm Great Britain before the fleets and air power of the United States will intervene. He hopes that he may once again repeat upon a greater scale than ever before that process of destroying his enemies one by one, by which he has so long thrived and prospered, and that then the scene will be clear for the final act, without which all his conquests would be in vain, namely, the subjugation of the Western Hemisphere to his will and to his system.

The Russian danger is therefore our danger and the danger of the United States just as the cause of any Russian fighting for his hearth and home is the cause of free men and free peoples in every quarter of the globe. Let us learn the lessons already taught by such cruel experience. Let us redouble our exertions and strike with united strength while life and power remain.

“V for Victory”

Message to the Peoples of Europe

20th July 1941

The V-Sign is the symbol of the unconquerable will of the occupied territories, and a portent of the fate awaiting the Nazi tyranny. So long as the peoples of Europe continue to refuse all collaboration with the invader, it is sure that his cause will perish, and that Europe will be liberated.

The Atlantic Charter

14th August 1941

The Original Version

The President of the United States and the Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, representing His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, being met together, deem it right to make known certain common principles in the national policies of their respective countries on which they base their hopes for a better future for the world.

FIRST, their countries seek no aggrandisement, territorial or other.

SECOND, they desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned.

THIRD, they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of Government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.

FOURTH, they will endeavour, with due respect for their existing obligations, to further the enjoyment by all States, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access, on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity.

FIFTH, they desire to bring about the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field, with the object of securing for all improved labour standards, economic advancement, and social security.

SIXTH, after the final destruction of Nazi tyranny, they hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all the men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want.

SEVENTH, such a peace should enable all men to traverse the high seas and oceans without hindrance.

EIGHTH, they believe all of the nations of the world, for realistic as well as spiritual reasons, must come to the abandonment of the use of force. Since no future peace can be maintained if land, sea or air armaments continue to be employed by nations which threaten, or may threaten, aggression outside of their frontiers, they believe, pending the establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security, that the disarmament of such nations is essential. They will likewise aid and encourage all other practical measures which will lighten for peace-loving peoples the crushing burden of armaments.

“War with Japan”

Delivered to House of Commons then broadcast
December 8th 1941

As soon as I heard, last night, that Japan had attacked the United States, I felt it necessary that Parliament should be immediately summoned. It is indispensable to our system of government that Parliament should play its full part in all the important acts of State and at all the crucial moments of the war; and I am glad to see that so many Members have been able to be in their places, despite the shortness of notice. With the full approval of the nation, and of the Empire, I pledged the word of Great Britain, about a month ago, that should the United States be involved with a war with Japan, a British declaration of war would follow within the hour. I therefore spoke to President Roosevelt on the Atlantic telephone last night, with a view to arranging the timing of our respective declarations. The President told me that he would this morning send a Message to Congress, which, of course, as is well known, can alone make a declaration of war on behalf of the United States, and I then assured him that we would follow immediately.

However, it soon appeared that British territory in Malaya had also been the object of Japanese attack, and later on it was announced from Tokyo that the Japanese High Command – a curious form; not the Imperial Japanese Government – had declared that a state of war existed with Great Britain and the United States. That being so, there was no need to wait for the declaration by Congress. American time is very nearly six hours behind ours. The Cabinet, therefore, which met at 12:30 today, authorised an immediate declaration of war upon Japan. Instructions were sent to his Majesty’s Ambassador at Tokyo, and a communication was dispatched to the Japanese Charge d’Affaires at 1 o’clock to-day to this effect:

Foreign Office, December 8th

Sir,

On the evening of December 7th His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom learned that Japanese forces, without previous warning, either in the form of a declaration of war or an ultimatum with a conditional declaration of war, had attempted a landing on the coast of Malaya and bombed Singapore and Hong Kong.

In view of these wanton acts of unprovoked aggression, constituting in flagrant violation of International Law, and particularly of Article I of the Third Hague Convention, relative to the opening of hostilities, to which both Japan and the United Kingdom are parties, His Majesty’s Ambassador at Tokyo has been instructed to inform the Imperial Japanese Government, in the name of His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom, that a state of war exists between the two countries.

I have the honour to be, with high consideration,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

Winston S. Churchill

Meanwhile hostilities had already begun. The Japanese began a landing in British territory in Northern Malaya at about 6 o’clock – 1 a.m. local time – yesterday, and they were immediately engaged by our Forces, which were in readiness. The Home Office measures against Japanese nationals were set in motion at 10:45 last night. The House will see, therefore, that no time has been lost, and that we are actually ahead of our engagements.

The Royal Netherlands Government at once marked their solidarity with Great Britain and the United States at 3 o'clock in the morning.

The Netherlands minister informed the Foreign Office that his Government were telling the Japanese Government that, in view of the hostile acts perpetrated by Japanese forces against two Powers with whom the Netherlands maintained particularly close relations, they considered that, as a consequence, a state of war now existed between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Japan.

I do not know what part of Siam, or Thailand, will be called upon to play the in this fresh war but a report has reached us that the Japanese have landed troops at Singora, which is in Siamese territory, on the frontier of Malaya, not far from the landing they made on the British side of the frontier.

Meanwhile, just before Japan had gone to war, I had sent the Siamese Prime Minister the following message. It was sent off on Sunday, early in the morning:

"There is a possibility of imminent Japanese invasion of your country. If you are attacked, defend yourself. The preservation of the full independence and sovereignty of Thailand is a British interest, and we shall regard an attack on you as an attack on ourselves."

It is worth while looking for a moment at the manner in which the Japanese have begun their assault upon the English-speaking world. Every circumstance of calculated and characteristic Japanese treachery was employed against the United States. The Japanese envoys, Nomura and Kurusu, were ordered to prolong their mission in the United States, in order to keep the conversations going while a surprise attack was being prepared, to be made before a declaration of war could be delivered. The President's appeal to the Emperor, which I have no doubt many Members will have read – it has been published largely in the papers here – reminding him of their ancient friendship and of the importance of preserving the peace of the Pacific, has received only this base and brutal reply. No one can doubt that every effort to bring about a peaceful solution has been made by the Government of the United States, and that immense patience and composure had been shown in face of the growing Japanese menace.

Now that the issue is joined in the most direct manner, it only remains for the two great democracies to face their task with whatever strength God may give them. We must hold ourselves very fortunate, and I think we may rate our affairs not wholly ill-guided, that we were not attacked alone by Japan in our period of weakness after Dunkirk, or at any time in 1940, before the United States had realised the dangers which threatened the whole world and had made much advance in its military preparation. So precarious and narrow was the margin upon which we then lived that we did not dare to express the sympathy which we have all along felt for the heroic people of China. We were even forced for a short time, in the summer of 1940, to agree to closing the Burma Road. But later on, at the beginning of the year, as soon as we could regather our strength, we reversed that policy, and the House will remember that both I and the Foreign Secretary have felt able to make increasingly outspoken declarations of friendship for the Chinese people and their great leader, General Chiang-Kai-Shek.

We have always been friends. Last night I cabled to the Generalissimo assuring him that henceforward we would face the common foe together. Although the imperative demands of the war in Europe and Africa have strained our resources, vast and growing though they are, the House and the Empire will notice that some of the finest ships in the Royal Navy have reached their stations in the Far East at a very convenient moment. Every preparation in our power has been made, and I not doubt that we shall give a good account of ourselves. The closest accord has been established with the powerful American forces, both naval and air, and also with the strong, efficient

forces, belonging to the Royal Netherlands Government in the Netherlands East Indies. We shall all do our best. When we think of the insane ambition and insatiable appetite which have caused this vast and melancholy extension of the war, we can only feel that Hitler's madness has infected the Japanese mind, and that the root of the evil and its branch must be extirpated together.

It is of the highest importance that there should be no underrating of the gravity of the new dangers we have to meet, either here or in the United States. The enemy has attacked with an audacity which may spring from recklessness but which may also spring from a conviction of strength. The ordeal to which the English-speaking world and our heroic Russian Allies are being exposed will certainly be hard, especially at the outset, and will probably be long, yet when we look around us over the sombre panorama of the world, we have no reason to doubt the justice of our cause or that our strength and will-power will be sufficient to sustain it. We have at least four-fifths of the population of globe on our side.

We are responsible for their safety and for their future. In the past we have had a light which flickered, in the present we have a light which flames, and in the future there will be a light which shines over all the land and sea.

Mr. Churchill repeated this speech on the radio the same evening, and added this appeal to munition workers:

It is particularly necessary that all munitions workers and those engaged in war industries should make a further effort proportionate to the magnitude of our perils and the magnitude of our cause. Particularly does this apply to tanks and, above all, to aircraft. Aircraft will be more than ever necessary now that the war has spread over so many wide spaces of the earth. I appeal to all those in the factories to do their utmost to make sure that we make an extra contribution to the general resources of the great alliance of free peoples that has been hammered and forged into strength amidst the fire of war.

Joint Session of Congress

Washington

26th December 1941

I feel greatly honoured that you should have invited me to enter the United States Senate Chamber and address the representatives of both branches of Congress. The fact that my American forebears have for so many generations played their part in the life of the United States, and that here I am, an Englishman, welcomed in your midst, makes this experience one of the most moving and thrilling in my life, which is already long and has not been entirely uneventful. I wish indeed that my mother, whose memory I cherish across the vale of years, could have been here to see. By the way, I cannot help reflecting that if my father had been American and my mother British, instead of the other way round, I might have got here on my own. In that case, this would not have been the first time you would have heard my voice. In that case I should not have needed any invitation, but if I had, it is hardly likely it would have been unanimous. So perhaps things are better as they are. I may confess, however, that I do not feel quite like a fish out of water in a legislative assembly where English is spoken.

I am a child of the House of Commons. I was brought up in my father's house to believe in democracy. "Trust the people" - that was his message. I used to see him cheered at meetings and in the streets by crowds of working men way back in those aristocratic Victorian days when, as Disraeli said, the world was for the few, and for the very few. Therefore I have been in full harmony all my life with the tides which have flowed on both side of the Atlantic against privilege and monopoly, and I have steered confidently towards the Gettysburg ideal of "government of the people by the people for the people." I owe my advancement entirely to the House of Commons, whose servant I am. In my country, as in yours, public men are proud to be the servants of the State and would be ashamed to be its masters. On any day, if they thought the people wanted it, the House of Commons could by a simple vote remove me from my office. But I am not worrying about it at all. As a matter of fact, I am sure they will approve very highly of my journey here, for which I obtained the King's permission in order to meet the President of the United States and to arrange with him all that mapping-out of our military plans, and for all those intimate meetings of the high officers of the armed services of both countries, which are indispensable to the successful prosecution of the war.

I should like to say first of all how much I have been impressed and encouraged by the breadth of view and sense of proportion which I have found in all quarters over here to which I have had access. Anyone who did not understand the size and solidarity of the foundations of the United States might easily have expected to find an excited, disturbed, self-centred atmosphere, with all minds fixed upon the novel, startling, and painful episodes of sudden war as they hit America. After all, the United States have been attacked and set upon by three most powerfully-armed dictator States. The greatest military power in Europe, the greatest military power in Asia, Germany and Japan, Italy, too, have all declared, and are making, war upon you, and a quarrel is opened, which can only end in their overthrow or yours. But here in Washington, in these memorable days, I have found an Olympian fortitude which, far from being based upon complacency, is only the mask of an inflexible purpose and the proof of a sure and well-grounded confidence in the final outcome. We in Britain had the same feeling in our darkest days. We, too, were sure in the end all would be well. You do not, I am certain, underrate the severity of the ordeal to which you and we have still to be subjected. The forces ranged against us are enormous. They are bitter, they are ruthless. The wicked men and their

factions who have launched their peoples on the path of war and conquest know that they will be called to terrible account if they cannot beat down by force of arms the peoples they have assailed. They will stop at nothing. They have a vast accumulation of war weapons of all kinds. They have highly-trained, disciplined armies, navies, and air services. They have plans and designs which have long been tried and matured. They will stop at nothing that violence or treachery can suggest.

It is quite true that, on our side, our resources in man-power and materials are far greater than theirs. But only a portion of your resources is as yet mobilised and developed, and we both of us have much to learn in the cruel art of war. We have therefore, without doubt, a time of tribulation before us. In this time some ground will be lost which it will be hard and costly to regain. Many disappointments and unpleasant surprises await us. Many of them will afflict us before the full marshalling of our latent and total power can be accomplished. For the best part of twenty years the youth of Britain and America have been taught that war is evil, which is true, and that it would never come again, which has been proved false. For the best part of twenty years the youth of Germany, Japan and Italy have been taught that aggressive war is the noblest duty of the citizen, and that it should be begun as soon as the necessary weapons and organisation had been made. We have performed the duties and tasks of peace. They have plotted and planned for war. This, naturally, has placed us in Britain and now places you in the United States at a disadvantage, which only time, courage and strenuous, untiring exertions can correct.

We have indeed to be thankful that so much time has been granted to us. If Germany had tried to invade the British Isles after the French collapse in June 1940, and if Japan had declared war on the British Empire and the United States at about the same date, no one could say what disasters and agonies might not have been our lot. But now at the end of December 1941, our transformation from easy-going peace to total war efficiency has made very great progress. The broad flow of munitions in Great Britain has already begun. Immense strides have been made in the conversion of American industry to military purposes, and now that the United States are at war it is possible for orders to be given every day which a year or eighteen months hence will produce results in war power beyond anything that has yet been seen or foreseen in the dictator States. Provided that every effort is made, that nothing is kept back, that the whole man-power, brain power, virility, valour, and civic virtue of the English-speaking world with all its galaxy of loyal, friendly, associated communities and States - provided all that is bent unremittingly to the simple and supreme task, I think it would be reasonable to hope that the end of 1942 will see us quite definitely in a better position than we are now, and that the year 1943 will enable us to assume the initiative upon an ample scale.

Some people may be startled or momentarily depressed when, like your President, I speak of a long and hard war. But our peoples would rather know the truth, sombre though it be. And after all, when we are doing the noblest work in the world, not only defending our hearths and homes but the cause of freedom in other lands, the question of whether deliverance comes in 1942, 1943, or 1944 falls into its proper place in the grand proportions of human history. Sure I am that this day - now - we are the masters of our fate; that the task which has been set us is not above our strength; that its pangs and toils are not beyond our endurance. As long as we have faith in our cause and an unconquerable will-power, salvation will not be denied us. In the words of the Psalmist, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." Not all the tidings will be evil.

On the contrary, mighty strokes of war have already been dealt against the enemy; the glorious defence of their native soil by the Russian armies and people have inflicted wounds upon the Nazi tyranny and system which have bitten deep, and will

fester and inflame not only in the Nazi body but in the Nazi mind. The boastful Mussolini has crumbled already. He is now but a lackey and serf, the merest utensil of his master's will. He has inflicted great suffering and wrong upon his own industrious people. He has been stripped of his African empire, Abyssinia has been liberated. Our armies in the East, which so weak and ill-equipped at the moment of French desertion, now control all the regions from Teheran to Benghazi, and from Aleppo and Cyprus to the sources of the Nile.

For many months we devoted ourselves to preparing to take the offensive in Libya. The very considerable battle, which has been proceeding for the last six weeks in the desert, has been most fiercely fought on both sides. Owing to the difficulties of supply on the desert flanks, we were never able to bring numerically equal forces to bear upon the enemy. Therefore, we had to rely upon a superiority in the numbers and quality of tanks and aircraft, British and American. Aided by these, for the first time, we have fought the enemy with equal weapons. For the first time we have made the Hun feel the sharp edge of those tools with which he had enslaved Europe. The armed forces of the enemy in Cyrenaica amounted to about 150,000, of whom about one-third were Germans. General Auchinleck set out to destroy totally that armed force. I have every reason to believe that his aim will be fully accomplished. I am glad to be able to place before you, members of the Senate and of the House of Representatives, at this moment when you are entering the war, proof that with proper weapons and proper organisation we are able to beat the life out of the savage Nazi. What Hitler is suffering in Libya is only a sample and foretaste of what we must give him and his accomplices, wherever this war shall lead us, in every quarter of the globe.

There are good tidings also from blue water. The life-line of supplies which joins our two nations across the ocean, without which all might fail, is flowing steadily and freely in spite of all the enemy can do. It is a fact that the British Empire, which many thought eighteen months ago was broken and ruined, is now incomparably stronger, and is growing stronger with every month. Lastly, if you will forgive me for saying it, to me the best tidings of all is that the United States, united as never before, have drawn the sword for freedom and cast away the scabbard.

All these tremendous facts have led the subjugated peoples of Europe to lift up their heads again in hope. They have put aside ever the shameful temptation of resigning themselves to the conqueror's will. Hope has returned to the hearts of scores of millions of men and women, and with that hope there burns the flame of anger against the brutal, corrupt invader, and still more fiercely burns the fires of hatred and contempt for the squalid quislings whom he has suborned. In a dozen famous ancient States now prostrate under the Nazi yoke, the masses of the people of all classes and creeds await the hour of liberation, when they too will be able once again to play their part and strike their blows like men. That hour will strike, and its solemn peal will proclaim that the night is past and that the dawn has come.

The onslaught upon us so long and so secretly planned by Japan has presented both our countries with grievous problems for which we could not be fully prepared. If people ask me - as they have a right to ask me in England - why is it that you have not got ample equipment of modern aircraft and Army weapons of all kinds in Malaya and in the East Indies, I can only point to the victories General Auchinleck has gained in the Libyan campaign. Had we diverted and dispersed our gradually growing resources between Libya and Malaya, we should have been found wanting in both theatres. If the United States have been found at a disadvantage at various points in the Pacific Ocean, we know well that it is to no small extent because of the aid you have been giving us in munitions for the defence of the British Isles and for the Libyan campaign, and, above all, because of your help in the battle of the Atlantic, upon which all depends, and which

has in consequence been successfully and prosperously maintained. Of course it would have been much better, I freely admit, if we had enough resources of all kinds to be at full strength at all threatened points; but considering how slowly and reluctantly we brought ourselves to large-scale preparations, and how long such preparations take, we had no right to expect to be in such a fortunate position.

The choice of how to dispose of our hitherto limited resources had to be made by Britain in time of war and by the United States in time of peace; and I believe that history will pronounce that upon the whole - and it is upon the whole that these matters must be judged - the choice made was right. Now that we are together, now that we are linked in a righteous comradeship of arms, now that our two considerable nations each in perfect unity, have joined all their life energies in a common resolve, a new scene opens upon which a steady light will glow and brighten.

Many people have been astonished that Japan should in a single day have plunged into war against the United States and the British Empire. We all wonder why, if this dark design, with all its laborious and intricate preparations, had been so long filling their secret minds, they did not choose our moment of weakness eighteen months ago. Viewed quite dispassionately, in spite of the losses we have suffered and the further punishment we shall have to take, it certainly appears to be an irrational act. It is, of course, only prudent to assume that they have made very careful calculations and think they see their way through. Nevertheless, there may be another explanation. We know that for many years past the policy of Japan has been dominated by secret societies of subalterns and junior officers of the Army and Navy, who have enforced their will upon successive Japanese Cabinets and Parliaments by the assassination of any Japanese statesman who opposed, or who did not sufficiently further, their aggressive policy. It may be that these societies, dazzled and dizzy with their own schemes of aggression and the prospect of early victories, have forced their country against its better judgment into war. They have certainly embarked upon a very considerable undertaking. For after the outrages they have committed upon us at Pearl Harbour, in the Pacific Islands, in the Philippines, in Malaya, and in the Dutch East Indies, they must now know that the stakes for which they have decided to play are mortal.

When we consider the resources of the United States and the British Empire compared to those of Japan, when we remember those of China, which has so long and valiantly withstood invasion and when also we observe the Russian menace which hangs over Japan, it becomes still more difficult to reconcile Japanese action with prudence or even with sanity. What kind of a people do they think we are? Is it possible they do not realise that we shall never cease to persevere against them until they have been taught a lesson which they and the world will never forget?

Members of the Senate and members of the House of Representatives, I turn for one moment more from the turmoil and convulsions of the present to the broader basis of the future. Here we are together facing a group of mighty foes who seek our ruin; here we are together defending all that to free men is dear. Twice in a single generation the catastrophe of world war has fallen upon us; twice in our lifetime has the long arm of fate reached across the ocean to bring the United States into the forefront of the battle. If we had kept together after the last War, if we had taken common measures for our safety, this renewal of the curse need never have fallen upon us.

Do we not owe it to ourselves, to our children, to mankind tormented, to make sure that these catastrophes shall not engulf us for the third time? It has been proved that pestilence may break out in the Old World, which carry their destructive ravages into the New World, from which, once they are afoot, the New World cannot by any means escape. Duty and prudence alike command first that the germ-centres of hatred and revenge should be constantly and vigilantly surveyed and treated in good time, and,

secondly, that an adequate organisation should be set up to make sure that the pestilence can be controlled at its earliest beginnings before it spreads and rages throughout the entire earth.

Five or six years ago it would have been easy, without shedding a drop of blood, for the United States and Great Britain to have insisted on fulfilment of the disarmament clauses of the treaties which Germany signed after the Great War; that also would have been the opportunity for assuring to Germany those raw materials which we declared in the Atlantic Charter should not be denied to any nation, victor or vanquished. That chance has passed. It is gone. Prodigious hammer-strokes have been needed to bring us together again, or if you will allow me to use other language, I will say that he must indeed have a blind soul who cannot see that some great purpose and design is being worked out here below, of which we have the honour to be the faithful servants. It is not given to us to peer into the mysteries of the future. Still, I avow my hope and faith, sure and inviolate, that in the days to come the British and American peoples will for their own safety and for the good of all walk together side by side in majesty, in justice, and in peace.

“Preparation – Liberation – Assault”

**Canadian Senate and House of Commons at Ottawa, Broadcast to the World
30th December 1941**

It is with feelings of pride and encouragement that I find myself here in the House of Commons of Canada, invited to address the Parliament of the senior Dominion of the Crown. I am very glad to see again my old friend Mr. Mackenzie King, for fifteen years out of twenty your Prime Minister, and I thank him for the too complimentary terms in which he has referred to myself. I bring you the assurance of good will and affection from every one in the common cause, and we know that you are resolved to do whatever more is possible as the need arises and as opportunity server. Canada occupies a unique position in the British Empire because of its unbreakable ties with Britain and its ever-growing friendship and intimate association with the United States. Canada is a potent magnet, drawing together those in the new world and in the old whose fortunes are now united in a deadly struggle for life and honour against the common foe. The contribution of Canada to the Imperial war effort in troops, in ships, in aircraft, in food, and in finance has been magnificent.

The Canadian Army now stationed in England has chafed not to find itself in contact with the enemy. But I am here to tell you that it has stood and still stands in the key position to strike at the invader should he land upon our shores. In a few months, when the invasion season returns, the Canadian Army may be engaged in one of the most frightful battles the world has ever seen, but on the other hand their presence may help to deter the enemy from attempting to fight such a battle on British soil. Although the long routine of training and preparation is undoubtedly trying to men who left prosperous farms and businesses, or other responsible civil work, inspired by an eager and ardent desire to fight the enemy, although this is trying to high-mettled temperaments, the value of the service rendered is unquestionable, and I am sure that the peculiar kind of self-sacrifice involved will be cheerfully or at least patiently endured.

The Canadian Government have imposed no limitation on the use of the Canadian Army, whether on the Continent of Europe or elsewhere, and I think it is extremely unlikely that this war will end without the Canadian Army coming to close quarters with the Germans, as their fathers did at Ypres, on the Somme, or on the Vimy Ridge. Already at Hong Kong, that beautiful colony which the industry and mercantile enterprise of Britain has raised from a desert island and made the greatest port of shipping in the whole world – Hong Kong, that Colony wrested from us for a time until we reach the peace table, by the overwhelming – at Hong Kong Canadian soldiers of the Royal Rifles of Canada and the Winnipeg Grenadiers, under a brave officer whose loss we mourn, have played a valuable part in gaining precious days, and have crowned with military honour the reputation of their native land.

Another major contribution made by Canada to the Imperial war effort is the wonderful and gigantic Empire training scheme for pilots for the Royal and Imperial Air Forces. This has now been as you know well in full career for nearly two years in conditions free from all interference by the enemy. The daring youth of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, with many thousands from the homeland, are perfecting their training under the best conditions, and we are being assisted on a large scale by the United States, many of whose training facilities have been placed at our disposal. This scheme will provide us in 1942 and 1943 with the highest class of trained pilots, observers, and air gunners in the numbers necessary to man the enormous flow of

aircraft which the factories of Britain, of the Empire and of the United States are and will be producing.

I could also speak on the naval production of corvettes and above all of merchant ships which is proceeding on a scale almost equal to the building of the United Kingdom, all of which Canada has set on foot. I could speak of many other activities, of tanks, of the special forms of modern high-velocity cannon and of the great supplies of raw materials and many other elements essential to our war effort on which your labours are ceaselessly and tirelessly engaged. But I must not let my address to you become a catalogue, so I turn to less technical fields of thought.

We did not make this war, we did not seek it. We did all we could to avoid it. We did too much to avoid it. We went so far at times in trying to avoid it as to be almost destroyed by it when it broke upon us. But that dangerous corner has been turned, and with every month and every year that passes we shall confront the evil-doers with weapons as plentiful, as sharp, and as destructive as those with which they have sought to establish their hateful domination.

I should like to point out to you that we have not at any time asked for any mitigation in the fury or malice of the enemy. The peoples of the British Empire may love peace. They do not seek the lands or wealth of any country, but they are a tough and hardy lot. We have not journeyed all this way across the centuries, across the oceans, across the mountains, across the prairies, because we are made of sugar candy.

Look at the Londoners, the Cockneys; look at what they have stood up to. Grim and gay with their cry "We can take it," and their war-time mood of "What is good enough for anybody is good enough for us." We have not asked that the rules of the game should be modified. We shall never descend to the German and Japanese level, but if anyone likes to play rough we can play rough too. Hitler and his Nazi gang have sown the wind; let them reap the whirlwind. Neither the length of the struggle nor any form of severity which it may assume shall make us weary or shall make us quit.

I have been all this week with the President of the United States, that great man whom destiny has marked for this climax of human fortune. We have been concerting the united pacts and resolves of more than thirty States and nations to fight on in unity together and in fidelity one to another, without any thought except the total and final extirpation of the Hitler tyranny, the Japanese frenzy, and the Mussolini flop.

There shall be no halting, or half measures, there shall be no compromise, or parley. These gangs of bandits have sought to darken the light of the world; have sought to stand between the common people of all the lands and their march forward into their inheritance. They shall themselves be cast into the pit of death and shame, and only when the earth has been cleansed and purged of their crimes and their villainy shall we turn from the task which they have forced upon us, a task which we were reluctant to undertake, but which we shall now most faithfully and punctiliously discharge. According to my sense of proportion, this is no time to speak of the hopes of the future, or the broader world which lies beyond our struggles and our victories. We have to win that world for our children. We have to win it by our sacrifices. We have not won it yet. The crisis is upon us. The power of the enemy is immense. If we waver in any way to underrate the strength, the resources or the ruthless savagery of that enemy, we should jeopardise, not only our lives, for they will be offered freely, but the cause of human freedom and progress to which we have vowed ourselves and all we have. We cannot for a moment afford to relax. On the contrary we must drive ourselves forward with unrelenting zeal. In this strange, terrible world war there is a place for everyone, man and woman, old and young, hale and halt; service in a thousand forms is open. There is no room now for the dilettante, the weakling, for the shirker, or the sluggard. The mine, the factory, the dockyard, the salt sea waves, the fields to till, the home, the hospital, the chair of the

scientist, the pulpit of the preacher – from the highest to the humblest tasks, all are of equal honour; all have their part to play. The enemies ranged against us, coalesced and combined against us, have asked for total war. Let us make sure they get it.

That grand old minstrel, Harry Lauder – Sir Harry Lauder, I should say, and no honour was better deserved – had a song in the last War which began, “If we all look back on the history of the past, we can just tell where we are.” Let us then look back. We plunged into this war all unprepared because we had pledged our word to stand by the side of Poland, which Hitler had feloniously invaded, and in spite of a gallant resistance had soon struck down. There followed those astonishing seven months which were called on this side of the Atlantic the “phoney” war. Suddenly the explosion of pent-up German strength and preparation burst upon Norway, Denmark, Holland, and Belgium. All these absolutely blameless neutrals, to most of whom Germany up to the last moment was giving every kind of guarantee and assurance, were overrun and trampled down. The hideous massacre of Rotterdam, where 30,000 people perished, showed the ferocious barbarism in which the German Air Force revels when, as in Warsaw and later Belgrade, it is able to bomb practically undefended cities.

On top of all this came the great French catastrophe. The French Army collapsed, and the French nation dashed into utter, and as it has so far proved, irretrievable confusion. The French Government had at their own suggestion solemnly bound themselves with us not to make a separate peace. It was their duty and it was also their interest to go to North Africa, where they would have been at the head of the French Empire. In Africa, with our aid, they would have had overwhelming sea power. They would have had the recognition of the United States, and the use of all the gold they had lodged beyond the seas. If they had done this Italy might have been driven out of the war before the end of 1940, and France would have held her place as a nation in the counsels of the Allies and at the conference table of the victors. But their generals misled them. When I warned them that Britain would fight on alone whatever they did, their generals told their Prime Minister and his divided Cabinet, “In three weeks England will have her neck wrung like a chicken.” Some chicken; some neck.

What a contrast has been the behaviour of the valiant, stout-hearted Dutch, who still stand forth as a strong living partner in the struggle! Their venerated Queen and their Government are in England, their Princess and her children have found asylum and protection here in your midst. But the Dutch nation are defending their Empire with dogged courage and tenacity by land and sea and in the air. Their submarines are inflicting a heavy daily toll upon the Japanese robbers who have come across the seas to steal the wealth of the East Indies, and to ravage and exploit its fertility and its civilisation. The British Empire and the United States are going to the aid of the Dutch. We are going to fight out this new war against Japan together. We have suffered together and we shall conquer together.

But the men of Bordeaux, the men of Vichy, they would do nothing like this. They lay prostrate at the foot of the conqueror. They fawned upon him. What have they got out of it? The fragment of France which was left to them is just as powerless, just as hungry as, and even more miserable, because more divided, than the occupied regions themselves. Hitler plays from day to day a cat-and-mouse game with these tormented men. One day he will charge them a little less for holding their countrymen down. Another day he will let out a few thousand broken prisoners of war from the one-and-a-half or one-and-three-quarter million millions he has collected. Or again he will shoot a few hundred French hostages to give them a taste of the lash. On these blows and favours the Vichy Government have been content to live from day to day. But even this will not go on indefinitely. At any moment it may suit Hitler’s plans to brush them away. Their

only guarantee is Hitler's good faith, which, as everyone knows, biteth like the adder and stingeth like the asp.

But some Frenchmen there were who would not bow their knees and who under General de Gaulle have continued to fight on the side of the Allies. They have been condemned to death by the men of Vichy, but their names will be held and are being held in increasing respect by nine Frenchmen out of every ten throughout the once happy, smiling land of France. But now strong forces are at hand. The tide has turned against the Hun. Britain, which the men of Bordeaux thought and then hoped would soon be finished, Britain with her Empire around her carried the weight of the war alone for a whole year through the darkest part of the valley. She is growing stronger every day. You can see it here in Canada. Anyone who has the slightest knowledge of our affairs is aware that very soon we shall be superior in every form of equipment to those who have taken us at a disadvantage of being but half armed.

The Russian armies, under their warrior leader, Josef Stalin, are waging furious war with increasing success along the thousand-mile front of their invaded country. General Auchinleck, at the head of a British, South African, New Zealand, and Indian army is striking down and mopping up the German and Italian forces which had attempted the invasion of Egypt. Not only are they being mopped up in the desert, but great numbers of them have been drowned on the way there by British submarines and the R.A.F. in which Australian squadrons played their part.

As I speak this afternoon an important battle is being fought around Jedabia. We must not attempt to prophesy its result, but I have good confidence. All this fighting in Libya proves that when our men have equal weapons in their hands and proper support from the air they are more than a match for the Nazi hordes. In Libya, as in Russia, events of great importance and of most hopeful import have taken place. But greatest of all, the mighty Republic of the United States has entered the conflict, and entered it in a manner which shows that for her there can be no withdrawal except by death or victory.

Mr. Churchill then spoke in French as follows :-

Et partout dans la France occupée et inoccupée (car leur sort est égal), ces honnêtes gens, ce grand peuple, la nation française, se redresse. L'espoir se rallume dans les coeurs d'une race guerrière, même désarmé, berceau de la liberté révolutionnaire et terrible aux vainqueurs esclaves. Et partout, on voit le point du jour, et la lumière grandit, rougeâtre, mais Claire. Nous ne perdons jamais la confiance que la France jouera la rôle de homes libres et qu'elle reprenra par des voies dures a place dans la grande compagnie des nations libératrices at victorieuses.

Ici, au Canada, où la langue française est honorée et parlée, nous nous tenons prêts at armes pour aider et pour saluer cette résurrection nationale.

(Translation)

And everywhere in France, occupied and unoccupied, for their fate is identical, these honest folk, this great people, the French nation, are rising again. Hope is springing up again in the hearts of a warrior race, even though disarmed, cradle of revolutionary liberty and terrible to slavish conquerors. And everywhere dawn is breaking and light spreading, reddish yet, but clear. We shall never lose confidence that France will play the role of free men again and, by hard paths, will once again attain her place in the great company of freedom-bringing and victorious nations. Here in Canada, where the French language is honoured and spoken, we are armed and ready to help and to hail this national resurrection.

Mr. Churchill then continued in English:-

Now that the whole of the North American continent is becoming one gigantic arsenal, and armed camp; now that the immense reserve power of Russia is gradually becoming apparent; now that long-suffering, unconquerable China sees help approaching; now that the outraged and subjugated nations can see daylight ahead, it is permissible to take a broad forward view of the war.

We may observe three main periods or phases of the struggle that lies before us. First there is the period of consolidation, of combination, and of final preparation. In this period, which will certainly be marked by much heavy fighting, we shall still be gathering our strength, resisting the assaults of the enemy, and acquiring the necessary overwhelming air superiority and shipping tonnage to give our armies the power to traverse, in whatever numbers may be necessary, the seas and oceans which, except in the case of Russia, separate us from our foes. It is only when the vast shipbuilding programme on which the United States has already made so much progress, and which you are powerfully aiding, comes into full flood, that we shall be able to bring the whole force of our manhood and of our modern scientific equipment to bear upon the enemy. How long this period will take depends upon the vehemence of the effort put in to production in all our war industries and shipyards.

The second phase which will then open may be called the phase of liberation. During this phase we must look to the recovery of the territories which have been lost or which may yet be lost, and also we must look to the revolt of the conquered peoples from the moment that the rescuing and liberating armies and air forces appear in strength within their bounds. For this purpose it is imperative that no nation or region overrun, that no Government or State which has been conquered, should relax its moral and physical efforts and preparation for the day of deliverance. The invaders, be they German or Japanese, must everywhere be regarded as infected persons to be shunned and isolated as far as possible. Where active resistance is impossible, passive resistance must be maintained. The invaders and tyrants must be made to feel that their fleeting triumphs will have a terrible reckoning, and that they are hunted men and that their cause is doomed. Particular punishment will be reserved for the quislings and traitors who make themselves the tools of the enemy. They will be handed over to the judgement of their fellow-countrymen.

There is a third phase which must also be contemplated, namely, the assault upon the citadels and the home-lands of the guilty Powers both in Europe and Asia. Thus I endeavour in a few words to cast some forward light upon the dark, inscrutable mysteries of the future. But in thus forecasting the course along which we should seek to advance, we must never forget that the power of the enemy, and the action of the enemy may at every stage affect our fortunes. Moreover, you will notice that I have not attempted to assign any time-limits to the various phases. These time-limits depend upon our exertions, upon our achievements, and on the hazardous and uncertain course of the war.

Nevertheless I feel it is right at this moment to make it clear that, while an ever-increasing bombing offensive against Germany will remain one of the principal methods by which we hope to bring the war to an end, it is by no means the only method which our growing strength now enables us to take into account. Evidently the most strenuous exertions must be made by all. As to the form which these exertions take, that is for each partner in the grand alliance to judge for himself in consultation with others and in harmony with the general scheme. Let us then address ourselves to our task, not in any way underrating its tremendous difficulties and perils, but in good heart and sober confidence, resolved that, whatever the cost, whatever the suffering, we shall stand by one another, true and faithful comrades, and do our duty, God helping us, to the end.

“Prime Minister for Two Years”

A World Broadcast

10th May 1942

I have now served for two years exactly to a day as the King's First Minister. Therefore I thought it would be a good thing if I had a talk to you on the broadcast, to look back a little on what we have come through, to consider how we stand now, and to peer cautiously, but at the same time resolutely, into the future. The tremendous period through which we have passed has certainly been full of anxieties and exertions; it has been marked by many misfortunes and disappointments. This time two years ago the Germans were beating down Holland and Belgium by unprovoked brutal, merciless invasion, and very soon there came upon us the total defeat of France and the fatal surrender at Bordeaux. Mussolini, the Italian miscalculator, thought he saw his chance of a cheap and easy triumph, and rich plunder for no fighting. He struck at the back of a dying France, and at what he believed was a doomed Britain. We were left alone - our quarter of a million Dunkirk troops saved, only disarmed; ourselves, as yet unarmed - to face the might of victorious Germany, to face also the carefully saved-up strength of an Italy which then still ranked as a first-class Power.

Here at home in this island, invasion was near; the Mediterranean was closed to us; the long route round the Cape, where General Smuts stands on guard, alone was open; our small, ill-equipped forces in Egypt and the Sudan seemed to await destruction. All the world, even our best friends, thought that our end had come. Accordingly, we prepared ourselves to conquer or to perish. We were united in that solemn, majestic hour; we were all equally resolved at least to go down fighting. We cast calculation to the winds; no wavering voice was heard; we hurled defiance at our foes; we faced our duty, and, by the mercy of God, we were preserved.

It fell to me in those days to express the sentiments and resolves of the British nation in that supreme crisis of its life. That was to me an honour far beyond any dreams or ambitions I had ever nursed, and it is one that cannot be taken away. For a whole year after the fall of France we stood alone, keeping the flag of freedom flying, and the hopes of the world alive. We conquered the Italian Empire, we destroyed or captured almost all Mussolini's African army; we liberated Abyssinia; we have so far successfully protected Palestine, Syria, Persia and Iraq from German designs. We have suffered grievous reverses in going to the aid of the heroic Greeks; we bore unflinching many a heavy blow abroad, and still more in our cities here at home; and all this time, cheered and helped by President Roosevelt and the United States, we stood alone, neither faltering nor flagging.

Where are we now? Can anyone doubt that if we are worthy of it, as we shall be, we have in our hands our own future? As in the last war, so in this, we are moving through many reverses and defeats to complete and final victory. We have only to endure and to persevere, to conquer. Now we are no longer unarmed; we are well armed. Now we are not alone; we have mighty allies, bound irrevocably by solemn faith and common interests to stand with us in the ranks of the United Nations. There can only be one end. When it will come, or how it will come, I cannot tell. But, when we survey the over-whelming resources which are at our disposal, once they are fully marshalled and developed - as they can be, as they will be - we may stride forward into the unknown with growing confidence.

During the time that we were all alone, we were steadily-growing stronger. He would have been a bold man, however, who in those days would have put down in black and white exactly how we were going to win. But, as has happened before in our island history, by remaining steadfast and unyielding - stubborn, if you will - against a Continental tyrant, we reached the moment when that tyrant made a fatal blunder. Dictators, as well as democracies and parliamentary governments, make mistakes sometimes. Indeed, when the whole story is told, I believe it will be found that the Dictators, for all their preparations and prolonged scheming, have made greater mistakes than the Democracies they have assailed. Even Hitler makes mistakes sometimes. In June last, without the slightest provocation, and in breach of a pact of non-aggression, he invaded the lands of the Russian people. At that time he had the strongest army in the world, trained in War, flushed with incredible unbroken success, and equipped with limitless munitions and the most modern weapons. He had also secured for himself the advantages of surprise and treachery. Thus he drove the youth and manhood of the German nation forward into Russia.

The Russians, under their warrior chief, Stalin, sustained losses which no other country or government has ever borne in so short a time and lived. But they, like us, were resolved never to give in. They poured out their own blood upon their native soil. They kept their faces to the foe. From the very first day to the end of the year, and on till to-night, they fought with unflinching valour. And, from the very first day when they were attacked, when no one could tell things would go, we made a brotherhood with them, and a solemn compact to destroy Nazidom and all its works. Then Hitler made his second grand blunder. He forgot about the winter. There is a winter, you know, in Russia. For a good many months the temperature is apt to fall very low. There is snow, there is frost, and all that. Hitler forgot about this Russian winter. He must have been very loosely educated. We all heard about it at school; but he forgot it. I have never made such a bad mistake as that. So winter came, and fell upon his ill-clad armies, and with the winter came the valiant Russian counter-attacks. No one can say with certainty how many millions of Germans have already perished in Russia and its snows. Certainly more have perished than were killed in the whole four and a quarter years of the last war. That is probably an understatement. So besotted is this man in his lust for blood and conquest, so blasting is the power he wields over the lives of Germans, that he even blurted out the other day that his armies would be better clothed and his locomotives better prepared for their second winter in Russia than they were for their first.

There was an admission about the length of the war that struck a chill into German hearts as cold as the icy winds of Russia. What will be the sufferings of the German manhood in this new bloodbath? What is there in front of Hitler now? Certain it is that the Russian armies are stronger than they were last year, that they have learnt by hard experience to fight the Germans in the field, that they are well-equipped, and that their constancy and courage are unquenched. That is what is in front of Hitler. What is he leaving behind him? He leaves behind him a Europe starving and in chains; a Europe in which his execution squads are busy in a dozen countries every day a Europe which has learned to hate the Nazi name as no name has ever been hated in the recorded history of mankind; a Europe burning for revolt whenever the opportunity comes.

But this is not all he has left behind. We are on his tracks, and so is the great Republic of the United States. Already the Royal Air Force has set about it; the British, and presently the American, bombing offensive against Germany will be one of the principal features in this year's world war. Now is the time to use our increasingly superior air strength, to strike hard and continually at the home front in Germany, from which so much evil has leaked out upon the world, and which is the foundation of the whole enormous German invasion of Russia. Now, while the German armies will be

bleeding and burning up their strength against the two-thousand-mile Russian line, and when the news of casualties by hundreds of thousands is streaming back to the German Reich, now is the time to bring home to the German people the wickedness of their rulers, by destroying under their very eyes the factories and seaports on which their war effort depends.

German propaganda has been constantly appealing of late to British public opinion to put a stop to these severe forms of warfare, which, according to the German view, should be the strict monopoly of the Herrenvolk. Herr Hitler himself has not taken at all kindly to this treatment, and he has been good enough to mingle terrible threats with his whinings. He warns us, solemnly, that if we go on smashing up the German cities, his war factories and his bases, he will retaliate against our cathedrals and historic monuments - if they are not too far inland. We have heard his threats before. Eighteen months ago, in September, 1940, when he thought he had an overwhelming Air Force at his command, he declared that he would rub out - that was the actual expression, rub out - our towns and cities. And he certainly had a good try. Now the boot is on the other leg. Herr Hitler has even called in question the humanity of these grim developments of war. What a pity this conversion did not take place in his heart before he bombed Warsaw, or massacred twenty thousand Dutch folk in defenceless Rotterdam, or wreaked his cruel vengeance upon the open city of Belgrade! In those days, he used to boast that for every ton of bombs we dropped on Germany, he would drop ten times, or even a hundred times, as many on Britain. Those were his words, and that was his belief. Indeed, for a time we had to suffer very severely from his vastly superior strength and utter ruthlessness.

But now it is the other way round. We are in a position to carry into Germany many times the tonnage of high explosives which he can send here, and this proportion will increase all the summer, all the autumn, all the winter, all the spring, all the summer, and so on, till the end! The accuracy of our bombing has nearly doubled, and, with continued practice, I expect it will improve still more. Moreover, at the same time, our methods of dealing with his raiders over here have more than repaid the immense care and science bestowed upon them, and the very large scale upon which they are applied. During the month of April we have destroyed one-tenth of all the raiding aircraft which have assailed our island; whereas, acting on a scale several times as big, the losses which we have suffered have been proportionately far smaller. We have waited long for this turning of the tables, and have taken whatever came to us meanwhile.

You will remember how the German propaganda films, seeking to terrorise neutral countries and glorying in devastating violence, were wont to show rows of great German bombers being loaded up with bombs, then flying in the air in battle array, then casting down showers of bombs upon the defenceless towns and villages below, choking them in smoke and flames. All this was represented from the beginning of the war to neutral countries as the German way of making war. All this was intended to make the world believe that resistance the German will was impossible, and that subjugation and slavery were the safest and easiest road. Those days are gone. Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small. And for my part, I hail it as an example of sublime and poetic justice that those who have loosed these horrors upon mankind will now in their homes and persons feel the shattering strokes of just retribution.

We have a long list of German cities in which all the vital industries of the German war machine are established. All these it will be our stern duty to deal with, as we have already dealt with Lübeck, with Rostock, and half-a-dozen important places. The civil population of Germany have, however, an easy way to escape from these severities. All they have to do is to leave the cities where munitions work- is being carried on-abandon their work, and go out into the fields, and watch their home fires

burning from a distance. In this way they may find time for meditation and repentance; there they may remember the millions of Russian women and children they have driven out to perish in the snows, and the mass executions of peasantry and prisoners-of-war which in varying scales they are inflicting upon so many of the ancient and famous peoples of Europe. There they may remember that it is the villainous Hitlerite regime which is responsible for dragging Germany through misery and slaughter to ultimate ruin, and learn that the tyrant's overthrow is the first step to world liberation.

We now wait in what is a stormy lull, but still a lull, before the hurricane bursts again in full fury on the Russian front. We cannot tell when it will begin; we have not so far seen any evidences of those great concentrations of German masses which usually precede their large-scale offensives. They may have been successfully concealed, or may not yet have been launched eastward. But it is now the tenth of May, and the days are passing. We send our salutations to the Russian armies, and we hope that the thousands of tanks and aeroplanes which have been carried to their aid from Britain and America will be a useful contribution to their own magnificently developed and re-organised munitions resources.

There is, however, one serious matter which I must mention to you. The Soviet Government have expressed to us the view that the Germans in the desperation of their assault may make use of poison gas against the armies and people of Russia. We are ourselves firmly resolved not to use this odious weapon unless it is used first by the Germans. Knowing our Hun, however, we have not neglected to make preparations on a formidable scale. I wish now to make it plain that shall treat the unprovoked use of poison gas against our Russian ally exactly as if it were used against ourselves, and if we are satisfied that this new outrage has been committed by Hitler, we shall use our great and growing air superiority in the west to carry gas warfare on the largest possible scale far and wide against military objectives in Germany. It is thus for Hitler to choose whether he wishes to add this additional horror to aerial warfare. We have for some time past been bringing our defensive and precautionary arrangements up to date, and I now give public warning, so that there may be no carelessness or neglect. Of one thing I am sure: that the British people, who have entered into the full comradeship of war with our Russian ally, will not shrink from any sacrifice or trial which that comradeship may require.

Meanwhile, our deliveries of tanks, aircraft and munitions to Russia from Britain and from the United States continue upon the full scale. We have the duty of escorting the northern convoys to their destination. Our sailors and merchant seamen face the fearful storms of the Arctic Circle, the lurking U-boats and shore-based aircraft, as well as attacks by German destroyers and surface craft, with their customary steadfastness and faithful courage. So far, though not without some loss both to the supply ships and their escorts, every convoy has successfully fought its way through, and we intend to persevere and fight it out on this northern route to the utmost of our strength.

Is there anything else we can do to take the weight off Russia? We are urged from many quarters to invade the continent of Europe and so form a second front. Naturally, I shall not disclose what our intentions are, but there is one thing I will say: I welcome the militant, aggressive spirit of the British nation so strongly shared across the Atlantic Ocean. Is it not far better that in the thirty-second month of this hard war we should find this general desire to come to the closest grips with the enemy than that there should be any signs of war-weariness? Is it not far better that demonstrations of thousands of people should gather in Trafalgar Square demanding the most vehement and audacious attacks, than that there should be the weepings and wailings and peace agitations which in other lands other wars have often hampered the action and vigour of governments? It is encouraging and inspiring to feel the strong heartbeats of a free

nation, surging forward, stern and undaunted, in a righteous cause. We must not fail them, either in daring or in wisdom.

This week, two islands have been in our minds - one is very large, the other very small - Madagascar and Malta. We have found it necessary to take precautions to prevent Madagascar falling into enemy hands, by some dishonourable and feeble drifting or connivance by Vichy, like that which injured us so much in Indo-China. It is three months since the decision was taken, and more than two months since the expedition left these shores. Its first task was to secure the splendid harbour of Diego Suarez, in the northern part of Madagascar, which, if it had fallen into Japanese hands, might have paralysed all our communications with India and the Middle East. While the troops were on the sea, I must tell you I felt a shiver every time I saw the word "Madagascar" in the newspapers. All those articles with diagrams and measured maps, showing how very important it was for us to take Madagascar and forestall the Japanese, and be there "first for once," as they said, filled me with apprehension. There was no question of leakage, or breach of confidence. As they say, great minds think alike. But shrewd surmise may be as dangerous as leakage. And it was with considerable relief that I learned the difficulties of our soldiers and their losses had been exaggerated, and that the operation had been swiftly and effectually carried out.

We hold this island in trust; we hold it in trust for that gallant France which we have known and marched with, and whose restoration to her place among the great Powers of the world is indispensable to the future of Europe. Madagascar rests under the safeguard of the United Nations. Vichy, in the grip of the Germans, has been made to bluster and protest. The France that rose at St. Nazaire, and will one day rise in indescribable fury against the Nazis, understands what we have done and gives us its trust.

The smaller island is Malta, a tiny rock of history and romance. To-day we welcome back to our shores General Dobbie, for nearly two years the heroic defender of Malta. The burden which he has borne so honourably and for so long entitles him to release and repose. In Lord Gort we have a new impulse. His work at Gibraltar has been of the highest order. It was not his fault that our armies did not have their chance in France. He is a grand fighter. For the moment the terrific air attack on Malta has slackened. It looks as if a lot of enemy aircraft had moved eastward. I wonder why? If so, another intense air battle for Malta, upon which the enemy have concentrated such an immense preponderance of strength, and for which they have sacrificed so many of those aircraft which they now have to count more carefully every day - another intense air battle will have been definitely won. But other perils remain, and I know of no man in the British Empire to whom I would sooner entrust the combating and beating-down of those perils than Lord Gort.

If we look back to-day over the course of the war as it has so far unfolded, we can see that it seems to divide itself into four very clearly defined chapters. The first ended with the over-running by the Nazis of Western Europe and with the fall of France. The second chapter, Britain alone, ended with Hitler's attack upon Russia. I will call the third chapter which then began, "the Russian glory." May it long continue! The fourth chapter opened at Pearl Harbour, when the military party in Japan treacherously attacked the United States and Great Britain in the Far East. That is where we are now.

The aggression of Italy in 1940 had carried the war from Europe to Africa. The aggression of Japan has involved all Asia, including unconquerable China, and in one way or another has drawn in, or will draw in, the whole of the American Continent. Thus the struggle has become world-wide, and the fate of all states and nations and their future is at stake. This latest chapter - universal war - confronts us with many difficulties and immense complications. But is there any thoughtful sensible person who cannot see

how vastly and decisively the awful balances have turned to the advantage of the cause of freedom ? It is true that the Japanese, taking advantage of our pre-occupations elsewhere, and of the fact that the United States had striven for so long to keep the peace, have seized more easily and more quickly than they expected their lands of booty and desire in the East Indian Archipelago. Henceforward they will find resistance stiffening on all their widely-spread fronts. They can ill afford losses such as those they have sustained in the naval action of the Coral Sea; so far we have no detailed accounts, but it is obvious, if only from the lies the Japanese have felt compelled to tell about the sinking of a battle-ship of the *Warspite* class, that a most vigorous and successful battle has been fought by the United States and Australian naval forces. The Japanese warlords cannot be indifferent to the losses of air-craft inflicted upon them at so many points, and particularly off the northern coasts of Australia, and in their repulse at Colombo and Trincomalee. At the start the pent-up, saved-up resources of Japan were bound to prevail in the Far Eastern theatre; but the strength of the United States, expressed in units of modern war power, actual and potential, is alone many times greater than the power of Japan. And we also shall make our contribution to the final defeat and punishment of this ambitious and greedy nation. Time will, however, be needed before the true strengths on either side of the Eastern war become manifest. I am not prone to make predictions, but I have no doubt to-night that British and American sea power will grip and hold the Japanese, and that overwhelming air power, covering vigorous military operations, will lay them low. This would come to pass, of course, very much sooner, should anything happen to Hitler in Europe.

Therefore to-night I give you a message of good cheer. You deserve it, and the facts endorse it. But be it good cheer or be it bad cheer will make no difference to us; we shall drive on to the end, and do our duty, win or die. God helping us, we can do no other.

"The End of the Beginning"

8th November 1942
Mansion House

I notice, My Lord Mayor, by your speech that you reached the conclusion that the news from the various fronts has been somewhat better lately. In our wars the episodes are largely adverse, but the final results have hitherto been satisfactory. Away we dash over the currents that may swirl around us, but the tide bears us forward on its broad, resistless flood. In the last war the way was uphill almost to the end. We met with continual disappointments, and with disasters far more bloody than anything we have experienced so far in this one. But in the end all the oppositions fell together, and all our foes submitted themselves to our will.

We have not so far in this war taken as many German prisoners as they have taken British, but these German prisoners will no doubt come in in droves at the end just as they did last time. I have never promised anything but blood, tears, toil, and sweat. Now, however, we have a new experience. We have victory - a remarkable and definite victory. The bright gleam has caught the helmets of our soldiers, and warmed and cheered all our hearts.

The late M. Venizelos observed that in all her wars England - he should have said Britain, of course - always wins one battle - the last. It would seem to have begun rather earlier this time. General Alexander, with his brilliant comrade and lieutenant, General Montgomery, has gained a glorious and decisive victory in what I think should be called the Battle of Egypt. Rommel's army has been defeated. It has been routed. It has been very largely destroyed as a fighting force.

This battle was not fought for the sake of gaining positions or so many square miles of desert territory. General Alexander and General Montgomery fought it with one single idea. They meant to destroy the armed force of the enemy, and to destroy it at the place where the disaster would be most far-reaching and irrecoverable.

All the various elements in our line of battle played Indian troops, Fighting French, the Greeks, the representatives of Czechoslovakia and the others who took part. The Americans rendered powerful and invaluable service in the air. But as it happened - as the course of the battle turned - it has been fought throughout almost entirely by men of British blood from home and from the Dominions on the one hand, and by Germans on the other. The Italians were left to perish in the waterless desert, or surrender as they are doing.

The fight between the British and the Germans was intense and fierce in been outmatched and outfought with the very kind of weapons with which they had beaten down so many small peoples, and also large unprepared peoples. They have been beaten by the very technical apparatus on which they counted to gain them the domination of the world. Especially is this true of the air and of the tanks and of the artillery, which has come back into its own on the battlefield. The Germans have received back again that measure of fire and steel which they have so often meted out to others.

Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning. Henceforth Hitler's Nazis will meet equally well armed, and perhaps better armed troops. Henceforth they will have to face in many theatres of war that superiority in the air which they have so often used without mercy against others, of which they boasted all round the world, and which they intended to use as an instrument for convincing all other peoples that all resistance to them was hopeless. When I read of the coastal road crammed with fleeing German vehicles under the

blasting attacks of the Royal Air Force, I could not but remember those roads of France and Flanders, crowded, not with fighting men, but with helpless refugees - women and children-fleeing with their pitiful barrows and household goods, upon whom such merciless havoc was wreaked. I have, I trust, a humane disposition, but I must say I could not help feeling that what was happening, however grievous, was only justice grimly reclaiming her rights.

It will be my duty in the near future to give to Parliament a full and particular account of these operations. All I will say of them at present is that the victory which has already been gained gives good prospect of becoming decisive and final so far as the defence of Egypt is concerned.

But this Battle of Egypt, in itself so important, was designed and timed as a prelude and counterpart of the momentous enterprise undertaken by the United States at the western end of the Mediterranean - an enterprise under United States command in which our Army, Air Force, and, above all, our Navy, are bearing an honourable and important share. Very full accounts have been published of all that is happening in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunis. The President of the United States, who is Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of America, is the author of this mighty undertaking, and in all of it I have been his active and ardent lieutenant.

You have no doubt read the declaration of President Roosevelt, solemnly endorsed by His Majesty's Government, of the strict respect which will be paid to the rights and interests of Spain and Portugal, both by America and Great Britain. Towards those countries our only policy is that they shall be independent and free, prosperous and at peace. Britain and the United States will do all that they can to enrich the economic life of the Iberian Peninsula. The Spaniards especially, after all their troubles, require and deserve peace and recuperation.

At this time our thoughts turn towards France, groaning in bondage under the German heel. Many ask themselves the question: Is France finished? Is that long and famous history, adorned by so many manifestations of genius and valour, bearing with it so much that is precious to culture and civilisation, and above all to the liberties of mankind - is all that now to sink for ever into the ocean of the past, or will France rise again and resume her rightful place in the structure of what may one day be again the family of Europe? I declare to you here, on this considerable occasion, even now when misguided or suborned Frenchmen are firing upon their rescuers, I declare to you my faith that France will rise again. While there are men like General de Gaulle and all those who follow him - and they are legion throughout France - and men like General Giraud, that gallant warrior whom no prison can hold, while there are men like those to stand forward in the name and in the cause of France, my confidence in the future of France is sure.

For ourselves we have no wish but to see France free and strong, with her Empire gathered round her and with Alsace-Lorraine restored. We covet no French possession; we have no acquisitive appetites or ambitions in North Africa or any other part of the world. We have not entered this war for profit or expansion, but only for honour and to do our duty in defending the right.

Let me, however, make this clear, in case there should be any mistake about it in any quarter. We mean to hold our own. I have not become the King's First Minister, in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire. For that task, if ever it were prescribed, someone else would have to be found, and, under democracy, I suppose the nation would have to be consulted. I am proud to be a member of that vast commonwealth and society of nations and communities gathered in and around the ancient British monarchy, without which the good cause might well have perished from

the face of the earth. Here we are, and here we stand, a veritable rock of salvation in this drifting world.

There was a time, not long ago, when for a whole year we stood all alone. Those days, thank God, have gone. We now move forward in a great and gallant company. For our record we have nothing to fear, we have no need to make excuses or apologies. Our record pleads for us, and will gain gratitude in the breasts of free men and women in - every part of the world.

As I have said, in this war we desire no territorial gains and no commercial favours; we wish to alter no sovereignty or frontier for our own benefit or profit. We have come into North Africa shoulder to shoulder with our American friends and allies for one purpose, a one purpose only - namely, to gain a vantage ground from which to open a new front against Hitler and Hitlerism, to cleanse the shores of Africa from the stain of Nazi and Fascist tyranny, to open the Mediterranean to allied sea power and air power, and thus effect the liberation of the peoples of Europe from the pit of misery into which they have been cast by their own improvidence and by the brutal violence of the enemy.

Those two African undertakings, in the east and in the west, were part of a single strategic and political conception which we have laboured long to bring to fruition, and about which we are now justified in entertaining good and reasonable confidence. Thus, taken together, they were two aspects of a grand design, vast in its scope, honourable in its motive, noble in its aim. The British and American affairs continue to prosper in the Mediterranean, and the whole event will be a new bond between the English-speaking peoples and a new hope for the whole world. I recall to you some lines of Byron, which seem to me to fit the event the hour, and the theme.

Millions of tongues record thee, and anew
Their children's lips shall echo them, and say-
Here, where the sword united nations drew,
Our countrymen were warring on that day!
And this is much, and all which will not pass away.

“A Four Years’ Plan”

Broadcast

21st March 1943

Let me first of all thank the very great numbers of people who have made kind inquiries about me during my recent illness. Although for a week I had a fairly stiff dose of fever, which but for modern science might have had awkward consequences, I wish to make it clear that I never for a moment had to relinquish the responsible direction of affairs. I followed attentively all the time what was happening in Parliament, and the lively discussions on our home affairs when peace comes.

It was very clear to me that a good many people were so much impressed by the favourable turn in our fortunes which has marked the last six months that they have jumped to the conclusion that the war will soon be over and that we shall soon all be able to get back to the politics and party fights of peace-time.

I am not able to share these sanguine hopes, and my earnest advice to you is to concentrate even more zealously upon the war effort, and if possible not to take your eye off the ball even for a moment. If to-night, contrary to that advice, I turn aside from the course of the war and deal with some post-war and domestic issues, that is only because I hope that by so doing I may simplify and mollify political divergences, and enable all our political forces to march forward to the main objective in unity and, so far as possible, in step.

First of all we must beware of attempts to over-persuade or even to coerce His Majesty’s Government to bind themselves or their unknown successors, in conditions which no one can foresee and which may be years ahead, to impose great new expenditure on the State without any relation to the circumstances which might prevail at that time, and to make them pledge themselves to particular schemes without relation to other extremely important aspects of our post-war needs.

The business of proposing expenditure rests ultimately with the responsible Government of the day, and it is their duty, and their duty alone, to propose to Parliament any new charges upon the public, and also to propose in the annual Budgets the means of raising the necessary funds.

The world is coming increasingly to admire Our British parliamentary system and ideas. It is contrary to those ideas that Ministers or members should become pledge-bound delegates. They are a band of men who undertake certain honourable duties, and they would be dishonoured if they allowed their right and duty to serve the public as well as possible on any given occasion to be prejudiced by the enforced, premature contraction of obligations. Nothing would be easier for me than to make any number of promises and to get the immediate response of cheap cheers and glowing leading articles. I am not in any need to go about making promises in order to win political support or to be allowed to continue in office.

It was on a grim and bleak basis that I undertook my present task, and on that basis I have been given loyalty and support such as no Prime Minister has ever received. I cannot express my feeling of gratitude to the nation for their kindness to me and for the trust and confidence they have placed in me during long, dark, and disappointing periods. I am absolutely determined not to falsify or mock that confidence by making promises without regard to whether they can be performed or not. At my time of life I have no personal ambitions, no future to provide for. And I feel I can truthfully say that I only wish

to do my duty by the whole mass of the nation and of the British Empire as long as I am thought to be of any use for that.

Therefore I tell you round your firesides tonight that I am resolved not to give or to make all kinds of promises and tell all kinds of fairy tales to you who have trusted me and gone with me so far, and marched through the valley of the shadow, till we have reached the upland regions on which we now stand with firmly planted feet.

However, it is our duty to peer through the mists of the future to the end of the war, and to try our utmost to be prepared by ceaseless effort and forethought for the kind of situations which are likely to occur. Speaking under every reserve and not attempting to prophesy, I can imagine that some time next year - but it may well be the year after - we might beat Hitler, by which I mean beat him and his powers of evil into death, dust, and ashes.

Then we shall immediately proceed to transport all the necessary additional forces and apparatus to the other side of the world to punish the greedy, cruel Empire Of Japan, to rescue China from her long torment, to free our territory and that of our Dutch Allies, and to drive the Japanese menace forever from Australian, New Zealand, and Indian shores.

That will be our first and supreme task, and nothing must lure us from it. Nevertheless, in my opinion the moment when Hitler is beaten and Germany and Italy are prostrate will mark the grand climax of the war, and that will be the time to make a new declaration upon the task before us. We and our Allies shall have accomplished one great task. Nazi tyranny and Prussian militarism, which threatened to engulf the whole world, and against which we stood alone for a fateful year - these curses will have been swept from the face of the earth.

If I should be spared to see that day, and should be needed at the helm at that time, I shall then, with the assent of the Cabinet, propose a new task to the British nation. The war against Japan will demand a very different arrangement of our forces from what exists at present.

There will certainly be large numbers of British, and also no doubt United States, soldiers whom it will not be physically possible to employ across the vast distances and poor communications of the Japanese war. There will certainly be large numbers of men, not only abroad but at home, who will have to be brought back to their families and to their jobs or to other equally good jobs. For all these, after full provision has been made for the garrisoning of the guilty countries, return to some-thing like home and freedom will be their hearts' desire. However vigorously the war against Japan is prosecuted, there will certainly be a partial demobilisation following on the defeat of Hitler, and this will raise most difficult and intricate problems, and we are taking care in our arrangements to avoid the mistakes which were so freely committed last time.

Of course these ideas may be completely falsified by events. It may be that Japan will collapse before Hitler, in which case quite another lay-out will be necessary. As, however, many people wish ardently to discuss the future, I adopt for this purpose tonight what seems to me the most likely supposition.

On this assumption it would be our hope that the United Nations, headed by the three great victorious Powers, the British Commonwealth of Nations, the United States, and Soviet Russia, should immediately begin to confer upon the future world organisation which is to be our safeguard against further wars by effectually disarming and keeping disarmed the guilty States, by bringing to justice the grand criminals and their accomplices, and by securing the return to the devastated and subjugated countries of the mechanical resources and artistic treasures of which they have been pillaged.

We shall also have a heavy task in trying to avert widespread famine in some at least of the ruined regions. We must hope and pray that the unity of the three leading

victorious Powers will be worthy of their supreme responsibility, and that they will think not only of their own welfare but of the welfare and future of all.

One can imagine that under a world institution embodying or representing the United Nations, and some day all nations, there should come into being a Council of Europe and a Council of Asia. As, according to the forecast I am outlining, the war against Japan will still be raging, it is upon the creation of the Council of Europe and the settlement of Europe that the first practical task will be centred. Now this is a stupendous business. In Europe lie most of the causes which have led to these two world wars. In Europe dwell the historic parent races from whom our Western civilisation has been so largely derived. I believe myself to be what is called a good European, and deem it a noble task to take part in reviving the fertile genius and in restoring the true greatness of Europe.

I hope we shall not lightly cast aside all the immense work which was accomplished by the creation of the League of Nations. Certainly we must take as our foundation the lofty conception of freedom, law and morality which was the spirit of the League. We must try - I am speaking of course only for ourselves - to make the Council of Europe, or whatever it may be called, into a really effective League, with all the strongest forces concerned woven into its texture, with a High Court to adjust disputes, and with forces, armed forces, national or inter-national or both, held ready to impose these decisions and prevent renewed aggression and the preparation of future wars.

Anyone can see that this Council when created must eventually embrace the whole of Europe, and that all the main branches of the European family must some day be partners in it. What is to happen to the large number of small nations whose rights and interests must be safeguarded? Here let me ask what would be thought of an army that consisted only of battalions and brigades, and which never formed any of the larger and higher organisations like army corps. It would soon get mopped up. It would therefore seem, to me at any rate, worthy of patient study that side by side with the Great Powers there should be a number of groupings of States or Confederations which would express themselves through their own chosen representatives, the whole making a Council of great States and groups of States.

It is my earnest hope, though I can hardly expect to see it fulfilled in my lifetime, that we shall achieve the largest common measure of the integrated life of Europe that is possible without destroying the individual characteristics and traditions of its many ancient and historic races. All this will I believe be found to harmonise with the high permanent interests of Britain, the United States, and Russia. It certainly cannot be accomplished without their cordial and concerted agreement and participation. Thus and thus only will the glory of Europe rise again.

I only mention these matters to you to show you the magnitude of the task that will lie before us in Europe alone. Nothing could be more foolish at this stage than to plunge into details and try to prescribe the exact groupings of States or lay down precise machinery for their co-operation, or still more to argue about frontiers now while the war even in the West has not yet reached its full height, while, the struggle with the U-boats is raging, and when the war in the Far East is only in its first phase. This does not mean that many tentative discussions are not taking place between the great nations concerned, or that the whole vast problem of European destiny - for that is what I am speaking of now - is not the subject of ceaseless heart-searchings.

We must remember, however, that we in Britain and the British Commonwealth of Nations, although almost a world in ourselves, shall have to reach agreements with great and friendly equals, and also to respect and have a care for the rights of weaker and smaller States, and that it will not be given to any one nation to achieve the full satisfaction of its individual wishes. I have said enough, however, I am sure, to show you,

at least in outline, the mystery, the peril, and, I will add, the splendour of this vast sphere of practical action into which we shall have to leap once the hideous spell of Nazi tyranny has been broken.

Coming nearer home, we shall have to consider at the same time how the inhabitants of this island are going to get their living at this stage in the world story, and how they are going to maintain and progressively improve their previous standards of life and labour. I am very much attracted to the idea that we should make and proclaim what might be called a Four Years' Plan. Four years seems to me to be the right length for the period of transition and reconstruction which will follow the downfall of Hitler. We have five-year Parliaments, and a Four Years' Plan would give time for the preparation of a second plan. This Four Years' Plan would cover five or six large measures of a practical character which must all have been the subject of prolonged, careful, energetic preparation beforehand, and which fit together into a general scheme.

When this plan has been shaped, it will have to be presented to the country, either by a National Government formally representative, as this one is, of the three parties in the State, or by a National Government comprising the best men in all parties who are willing to serve. I cannot tell how these matters will settle themselves. But in 1944 our present Parliament will have lived nine years, and by 1945 ten years, and as soon as the defeat of Germany has removed the danger now at our throats, and the register can be compiled and other necessary arrangements made, a new House of Commons must be freely chosen by the whole electorate, including, of course, the armed forces wherever they maybe. Thus whoever is burdened with the responsibility of conducting affairs will have a clear policy, and will be able to speak and act at least in the name of an effective and resolute majority.

From what I have said already you will realise how very difficult and anxious this period will be, and how much will depend not only on our own action but on the action of other very powerful countries. This applies not only to the carrying to a conclusion of the war against Japan, but also to the disarming of the guilty and to the settlement of Europe ; not only to the arrangements for the prevention of further wars, but also to the whole economic process and relationship of nations, in order that the ruin of our wealth may be rapidly repaired, in order that employment and production may be at a high level, and that goods and services may be interchanged between man and man, and between one nation and another, under the best conditions and on the largest scale.

The difficulties which will confront us will take all our highest qualities to overcome. Let me, however, say straight away that my faith in the vigour, ingenuity, and resilience of the British race is invincible. Difficulties mastered are opportunities won. The day of Hitler's downfall will be a bright one for our country and for all man-kind. The bells will clash their peals of victory and hope, and we shall march forward together encouraged, invigorated, and still, I trust, generally united upon our further journey.

I personally am very keen that a scheme for the amalgamation and extension of our present incomparable insurance system should have a leading place in our Four Years' Plan. I have been prominently connected with all these schemes of national compulsory organised thrift from the time when I brought my friend Sir William Beveridge into the public service 35 years ago, when I was creating the labour exchanges, on which he was a great authority, and when, with Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, I framed the first unemployment insurance scheme. The prime parent of all national insurance schemes is Mr. Lloyd George. I was his lieutenant in those distant days, and afterwards it fell to me, as Chancellor of the Exchequer 18 years ago, to lower the pensions age to 65 and to bring in the widows and orphans.

The time is now ripe for another great advance, and anyone can see what large savings there will be in the administration once the whole process of insurance has

become unified, compulsory, and national. Here is a real opportunity for what I once called "bringing the magic of averages to the rescue of the millions." Therefore, you must rank me and my colleagues as strong partisans of national compulsory insurance for all classes for all purposes from the cradle to the grave. Every preparation, including, if necessary, preliminary legislative preparation, will be made with the utmost energy, and the necessary negotiations to deal with worthy existing interests are being actively pursued, so that when the moment comes everything will be ready.

Here let me remark that the best way to insure against unemployment is to have no unemployment. There is another point. Unemployables, rich or poor, will have to be toned up. We cannot afford to have idle people. Idlers at the top make idlers at the bottom. No one must stand aside in his working prime to pursue a life of selfish pleasure. There are wasters in all classes. Happily they are only a small minority in every class. But anyhow we cannot have a band of drones in our midst, whether they come from the ancient aristocracy or the modern plutocracy or the ordinary type of pub-crawler.

There are other large matters which will also have to be dealt with in our Four Years' Plan, upon which thought, study, and discussion are advancing rapidly. Let me take first of all the question of British agriculture. We have, of course, to purchase a large proportion of our food and vital raw materials overseas. Our foreign investments have been expended in the common cause. The British nation that has now once again saved the freedom of the world has grown great on cheap and abundant food. Had it not been for the free trade policy of Victorian days, our population would never have risen to the level of a Great Power, and we might have gone down the drain with many other minor States, to the disaster of the whole world.

Abundant food has brought our 47,000,000 Britons into the world. Here they are, and they must find their living. It is absolutely certain we shall have to grow a larger proportion of our food at home. During the war immense advances have been made by the agricultural industry. The position of the farmers has been improved, the position of the labourers immeasurably improved. The efficient agricultural landlord has an important part to play. I hope to see a vigorous revival of healthy village life on the basis of these higher wages and of improved housing, and, what with the modern methods of locomotion and the modern amusements of the cinemas and the wireless, to which will soon be added television, life in the country and on the land ought to compete in attractiveness with life in the great cities.

But all this would cost money. When the various handicaps of war conditions are at an end, I expect that better national house-keeping will be possible, and that, as the result of technical improvements in British agriculture, the strain upon the State will be relieved. At the same time the fact remains that if the expansion and improvement of British agriculture is to be maintained, as it must be maintained, and a reasonable level of prices is to be maintained, as it must be maintained, there are likely to be substantial charges which the State must be prepared to shoulder. That has to be borne in mind.

Next there is the spacious domain of public health. I was brought up on the maxim of Lord Beaconsfield which my father was always repeating:- "Health and the laws of health." We must establish on broad and solid foundations a National Health Service. Here let me say that there is no finer investment for any community than putting milk into babies. Healthy citizens are the greatest asset any country can have.

One of the most sombre anxieties which beset those who look 30 or 40 or 50 years ahead, and in this field one can see ahead only too clearly, is the dwindling birth-rate. In 30 years, unless present trends alter, a smaller working and fighting population will have to support and protect nearly twice as many old people: in 50 years the position will be worse still. If this country is to keep its high place in the leadership of the world,

and to survive as a great Power that can hold its own against external pressures, our people must be encouraged by every means to have larger families.

For this reason, well-thought-out plans for helping parents to contribute this life-spring to the community are of prime importance. The care of the young and the establishment of sound hygienic conditions of motherhood have a bearing upon the whole future of the race which is absolutely vital. Side by side with that is the war upon disease, which, let me remind you, so far as it is successful, will directly aid the national insurance scheme. Upon all this, planning is vigorously proceeding.

Following upon health and welfare is the question of education. The future of the world is to the highly-educated races who alone can handle the scientific apparatus necessary for pre-eminence in peace or survival in war. I hope our education will become broader and more liberal. All wisdom is not new wisdom, and the past should be studied if the future is to be successfully encountered. To quote Disraeli again in one of his most pregnant sayings: "Nations are governed by force or by tradition." In moving steadily and steadfastly from a class to a national foundation in the politics and economics of our society and civilisation, we must not forget the glories of the past, nor how many battles we have fought for the rights of the individual and for human freedom.

We must beware of trying to build a society in which nobody counts for anything except a politician or an official, a society where enterprise gains no reward and thrift no privileges. I say "trying to build," because of all races in the world our people would be the last to consent to be governed by a bureaucracy. Freedom is their life-blood. These two great wars, scourging and harrowing men's souls, have made the British nation master in its own house. The people have been rendered conscious that they are coming into their inheritance. The treasures of the past, the toil of the centuries, the long-built-up conceptions of decent government and fair play, the tolerance which comes from the free working of Parliamentary and electoral institutions, and the great Colonial possessions for which we are trustees in every part of the globe - all these constitute parts of this inheritance, and the nation must be fitted for its responsibilities and high duty.

Human beings are endowed with infinitely varying qualities and dispositions, and each one is different from the others. We cannot make them all the same. It would be a pretty dull world if we did. It is in our power, however, to secure equal opportunities for all. The facilities for advanced education must be evened out and multiplied. No one who can take advantage of a higher education should be denied this chance. You cannot conduct a modern community except with an adequate supply of persons upon whose education, whether humane, technical, or scientific, much time and money have been spent.

There is another element which should never be banished from our system of education. Here we have freedom of thought as well as freedom of conscience. Here we have been the pioneers of religious toleration. But side by side with all this has been the fact that religion has been a rock in the life and character of the British people upon which they have built their hopes and cast their cares. This fundamental element must never be taken from our schools, and I rejoice to learn of the enormous progress that is being made among all religious bodies in freeing themselves from sectarian jealousies and feuds, while preserving fervently the tenets of their own faith.

The secular schooling of the great mass of our scholars must be progressively prolonged, and for this we must both improve our schools and train our teachers in good time. After school-time ends, we must not throw our youth uncared-for and unsupervised on to the labour market, with its "blind alley" occupations which start so fair and often end so foul. We must make plans for part-time release from industry, so

that our young people may have the chance to carry on their general education and also to obtain a specialised education which will fit them better for their work.

Under our ancient monarchy, that bulwark of British liberties, that barrier against dictatorships of all kinds, we intend to move forward in a great family, preserving the comradeships of the war free for ever from the class prejudice and other forms of snobbery from which in modern times we have suffered less than most other nations, and from which we are now shaking ourselves entirely free. Britain is a fertile mother, and natural genius springs from the whole people.

We have made great progress, but we must make far greater progress. We must make sure that the path to the higher functions throughout our society and Empire is really open to the children of every family. Whether they can tread that path will depend upon their qualities tested by fair competition. All cannot reach the same level, but all must have their chance. I look forward to a Britain so big that she will need to draw her leaders from every type of school and wearing every kind of tie. Tradition may play its part, but broader systems must now rule.

We have one large immediate task in the replanning and rebuilding of our cities and towns. This will make a very great call on all our resources in material and labour, but it is also an immense opportunity, not only for the improvement of our housing, but for the employment of our people in the years immediately after the war.

In the far-reaching scheme for reorganising the building industry, prepared by the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Works, will be found another means of protecting our insurance fund from the drain of unemployment relief. Mr. Bevin is attacked from time to time, now from one side, now from another. When I think of the tremendous changes which have been effected under the strain of war in the lives of the whole people, of both sexes and of every class, with so little friction, and when I consider the practical absence of strikes in this war compared to what happened in the last, I think he will be able to take it all right.

You will see from what I have said that there is no lack of material for a Four Years' Plan for the transition period from war to peace, and for another plan after that. For the present during the war our rule should be, no promises but every preparation, including where required preliminary legislative preparation.

Before I conclude I have to strike two notes, one of sober caution and the other of confidence. You shall have the caution first. All our improvements and expansion must be related to a sound and modernised finance.

A friend of mine said the other day in the House of Commons that "pounds, shillings, and pence were meaningless symbols." This made me open my eyes. What then are we to say about the savings of the people? We have just begun a "Wings for Victory" War Savings campaign, to which all classes have subscribed. Vast numbers of people have been encouraged to purchase war savings certificates. Income-tax is collected from the wage-earners of a certain level and carried to a nest-egg for them at the end of the war, the Government having the use of the money meanwhile. A nest-egg similar in character will be given to the armed forces. Those whose houses have been destroyed by air raid damage and who have in many cases paid insurance are entitled to compensation. All these obligations were contracted in pounds, shillings, and pence.

At the end of this war there will be seven or eight million people in the country with £200 or £300 apiece, a thing unknown in our history. These savings of the nation, arising from the thrift, skill, or devotion of individuals, are sacred. The State is built around them, and it is the duty of the State to redeem its faith in an equal degree of value. I am not one of those who are wedded to undue rigidity in the management of the currency system, but this I say: That over a period of 10 or 15 years there ought to be a fair, steady continuity of values if there is to be any faith between man and man or

between the individual and the State. We have successfully stabilised prices during the war. We intend to continue this policy after the war to the utmost of our ability.

This brings me to the subject of the burden and incidence of taxation. Direct taxation on all classes stands at unprecedented and sterilising levels. Besides this there is indirect taxation raised to a remarkable height.

In war-time our people are willing and even proud to pay, all these taxes. But such conditions could not continue in peace. We must expect taxation after the war to be heavier than it was before the war, but we do not intend to shape our plans or levy taxation in a way which, by removing personal incentive, would destroy initiative and enterprise.

If you take any single year of peace and take a slice through the industry and enterprise of the nation - see how important is the spirit of enterprise and ingenuity - you will find work which is being done at the moment, work that is being planned for the next year, and projects for the third, fourth, and even the fifth year ahead which are all maturing. War cuts down all this forward planning, and everything is subordinated to the struggle for national existence. Thus, when peace came suddenly, as it did last time, there were no long carefully prepared plans for the future. That was one of the main reasons why at the end of the last war, after a momentary recovery, we fell into a dreadful trough of unemployment. We must not be caught again that way.

It is therefore necessary to make sure that we have projects for the future employment of the people and the forward movement of our industries carefully foreseen, and, secondly, that private enterprise and State enterprise are both able to play their parts to the utmost.

A number of measures are being and will be prepared which will enable the Government to exercise a balancing influence upon development which can be turned on or off as circumstances require. There is a broadening field for State ownership and enterprise, especially in relation to monopolies of all kinds. The modern State will increasingly concern itself with the economic well-being of the nation, but it is all the more vital to revive at the earliest moment a widespread healthy and vigorous private enterprise without which we shall never be able to provide, in the years when it is needed, the employment for our soldiers, sailors, and airmen to which they are entitled after their duty has been done.

In this brief survey I have tried to set before you both hopes and fears: I have given both caution and encouragement. But if I have to strike a balance, as I must do before the end, let me proclaim myself a faithful follower of the larger hope. I will proceed to back this hope with some solid facts. Anyone can see the difficulties of placing our exports profitably in a world so filled with ruined countries. Foreign trade to be of value must be fertile. There is no use in doing business at a loss. Nevertheless I am advised that in view of the general state of the world after the defeat of Hitler, there will be considerable opportunities for re-establishing our exports. Immediately after the war there will be an intense demand, both for home and export, for what are called consumable goods, such as clothes, furniture, and textiles.

I have spoken of the immense building programme, and we all know the stimulus which that is to a large number of trades, including the electrical and metal industries. We have learnt much about production under the stress of war. Our methods have vastly improved. The lay-out of our factories presents an entirely new and novel picture to the eye. Mass production has been forced upon us. The electrification of industry has been increased 50 per cent. There are some significant new industries offering scope for the inventiveness and vigour which made this country great. When the fetters of wartime are struck off and we turn free hands to the industrial tasks of peace, we may be astonished

at the progress in efficiency we shall suddenly find displayed. I can only mention a few instances of fields of activity.

The ceaseless improvements in wireless and the wonders of radio-location, applied to the arts of peace, will employ the radio industry. Striking advances are open for both gas and electricity as the servants of industry, agriculture, and the cottage home. There is civil aviation. There is forestry. There is transportation in all its forms. We were the earliest in the world with railways; we must bring them up to date in every respect. Here, in these few examples, are gigantic opportunities which, if used, will in turn increase our power to serve other countries with the goods they want.

Our own effort must be supported by international arrangements and agreements more neighbourlike and more sensible than before. We must strive to secure our fair share of an augmented world trade. Our fortunes will be greatly influenced by the policies of the United States and the British Dominions, and we are doing our utmost to keep in ever closer contact with them. We have lately put before them and our other friends and allies some tentative suggestions for the future management of the exchanges and of international currency, which will shortly be published. But this is a first instalment only.

I have heard a great deal on both sides of these questions, during the forty years I have served in the House of Commons and the twenty years or more I have served in Cabinets. I have tried to learn from events, and also from my own mistakes, and I tell you my solemn belief, which is that if we act with comradeship and loyalty to our country and to one another, and if we can make State enterprise and free enterprise both serve national interests and pull the national wagon side by side, then there is no need for us to run into that horrible, devastating slump or into that squalid epoch of bickering and confusion which mocked and squandered the hard-won victory we gained a quarter of a century ago.

I end where I began. Let us get back to our job. I must warn every one who hears me of a certain, shall I say, unseemliness and also of a danger of its appearing to the world that we here in Britain are diverting our attention to peace, which is still remote, and to the fruits of victory, which have yet to be won, while our Russian allies are fighting for dear life and dearer honour in the dire, deadly, daily struggle against all the might of the German military machine, and while our thoughts should be with our armies and with our American and French comrades now engaged in decisive battle in Tunisia. I have just received a message from General Montgomery that the Eighth Army are on the move and that he is satisfied with their progress.

Let us wish them Godspeed in their struggle, and let us bend all our efforts to the war and to the ever more vigorous prosecution of our supreme task.

“Unconditional Surrender”

8th May 1945

Broadcast and House of Commons

German armed forces surrendered unconditionally on May 7. Hostilities in Europe ended officially at midnight, May 8, 1945. Yesterday morning at 2:41 a.m. at Headquarters, General Jodl, the representative of the German High Command, and Grand Admiral Doenitz, the designated head of the German State, signed the act of unconditional surrender of all German Land, sea, and air forces in Europe to the Allied Expeditionary Force, and simultaneously to the Soviet High Command.

General Bedell Smith, Chief of Staff of the Allied Expeditionary Force, and General Francois Sevez signed the document on behalf of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force, and General Susloparov signed on behalf of the Russian High Command. To-day this agreement will be ratified and confirmed at Berlin, where Air Chief Marshal Tedder, Deputy Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force, and General de Lattre de Tassigny will sign on behalf of General Eisenhower. Marshal Zhukov will sign on behalf of the Soviet High Command. The German representatives will be Field-Marshal Keitel, Chief of the High Command, and the Commanders-in-Chief of the German Army, Navy, and Air Forces.

Hostilities will end officially at one minute after midnight to-night (Tuesday, May 8), but in the interests of saving lives the "Cease fire" began yesterday to be sounded all along the front, and our dear Channel Islands are also to be freed to-day.

The Germans are still in places resisting the Russian troops, but should they continue to do so after midnight they will, of course, deprive themselves of the protection of the laws of war, and will be attacked from all quarters by the Allied troops. It is not surprising that on such long fronts and in the existing disorder of the enemy the orders of the German High Command should not in every case be obeyed immediately. This does not, in our opinion, with the best military advice at our disposal, constitute and reason for withholding from the nation the facts communicated to us by General Eisenhower of the unconditional surrender already signed at Rheims, nor should it prevent us from celebrating to-day and to-morrow (Wednesday) as Victory in Europe days.

To-day, perhaps, we shall think mostly of ourselves. To-morrow we shall pay a particular tribute to our Russian comrades, whose prowess in the field has been one of the grand contributions to the general victory.

The German war is therefore at an end. After years of intense preparation, Germany hurled herself on Poland at the beginning of September, 1939; and, in pursuance of our guarantee to Poland and in agreement with the French Republic, Great Britain, the British Empire and Commonwealth of Nations, declared war upon this foul aggression. After gallant France had been struck down we, from this Island and from our united Empire, maintained the struggle single-handed for a whole year until we were joined by the military might of Soviet Russia, and later by the overwhelming power and resources of the United States of America.

Finally almost the whole world was combined against the evil-doers, who are now prostrate before us. Our gratitude to our splendid Allies goes forth from all our hearts in this Island and throughout the British Empire.

We may allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing; but let us not forget for a moment the toil and efforts that lie ahead. Japan, with all her treachery and greed, remains unsubdued. The injury she has inflicted on Great Britain, the United States, and other countries, and her detestable cruelties, call for justice and retribution. We must now

devote all our strength and resources to the completion of our task, both at home and abroad. Advance, Britannia! Long live the cause of freedom! God save the King!

In the House of Commons later Churchill repeated the address and then went on to say:-

That is the message which I have been instructed to deliver to the British Nation and Commonwealth. I have only two or three sentences to add. They will convey to the House my deep gratitude to this House of Commons, which has proved itself the strongest foundation for waging war that has ever been seen in the whole of our long history. We have all of us made our mistakes, but the strength of the Parliamentary institution has been shown to enable it at the same moment to preserve all the title-deeds of democracy while waging war in the most stern and protracted form. I wish to give my hearty thanks to men of all Parties, to everyone in every part of the House where they sit, for the way in which the liveliness of Parliamentary institutions has been maintained under the fire of the enemy, and for the way in which we have been able to persevere—and we could have persevered much longer if need had been—till all the objectives which we set before us for the procuring of the unlimited and unconditional surrender of the enemy had been achieved. I recollect well at the end of the last war, more than a quarter of a century ago, that the House, when it heard the long list of the surrender terms, the armistice terms, which had been imposed upon the Germans, did not feel inclined for debate or business, but desired to offer thanks to Almighty God, to the Great Power which seems to shape and design the fortunes of nations and the destiny of man; and I therefore beg, Sir, with your permission to move: “That this House do now attend at the Church of St Margaret, Westminster, to give humble and reverent thanks to Almighty God for our deliverance from the threat of German domination.”

“This is Your Victory”

8th May 1945

Ministry of Health

God bless you all. This is your victory! It is the victory of the cause of freedom in every land. In all our long history we have never seen a greater day than this. Everyone, man or woman, has done their best. Everyone has tried. Neither the long years, nor the dangers, nor the fierce attacks of the enemy, have in any way weakened the independent resolve of the British nation. God bless you all.

“Vote National, Not Party”

Broadcast

4th June 1945

I am sorry to have lost so many good friends who served with me in the five years' Coalition. It was impossible to go on in a state of “electionitis” all through the summer and autumn. This election will last quite long enough for all who are concerned in it, and I expect many of the general public will be sick and tired of it before we get to polling day.

My sincere hope was that we could have held together until the war against Japan was finished. On the other hand, there was a high duty to consult the people after all these years. I could only be relieved of that duty by the full agreement of the three parties, further fortified, perhaps, by a kind of official Gallup Poll, which I am sure would have resulted in an overwhelming request that we should go on to the end and finish the job. That would have enabled me to say at once, “There will be no election for a year,” or words to that effect.

I know that many of my Labour colleagues would have been glad to carry on. On the other hand, the Socialist Party as a whole had been for some time eager to set out upon the political warpath, and when large numbers of people feel like that it is not good for their health to deny them the fight they want. We will therefore give it to them to the best of our ability.

Party, my friends, has always played a great part in our affairs. Party ties have been considered honourable bonds, and no one could doubt that when the German war was over and the immediate danger to this country, which had led to the Coalition, had ceased, conflicting loyalties would arise. Our Socialist and Liberal friends felt themselves forced, therefore, to put party before country. They have departed, and we have been left to carry the nation's burden.

I have therefore formed, exactly as I said I would two years ago, another form of National Government, resting no longer on the agreement of the three official party machines, but on the Conservative Party, together with all the men of good will of any party or no party who have been ready to give their services. I claim the support of all throughout the country who sincerely put the nation first in their thoughts. This is a National Government. I shall stand myself as a Conservative and National candidate. Others may choose to call themselves National or National Liberal, and those who give us their support should vote National rather than Party on polling day.

Why do I claim the right to call this Government National? First of all, because those who have left us have left us on party grounds alone. Secondly, because the Conservative Party, which has for many years been the strongest party in this country, has been willing to abandon party feeling to such an extent that more than one-third of the members of Cabinet rank in this new Government are not members of the Conservative Party. Many of these very able men, without whose aid we could not have got through the war, would prefer not to call themselves Conservative in a party sense. They prefer to call themselves National. And many Conservatives who might have looked forward to high office have accepted cheerfully the interruption of their political careers in order to aid the nation in its time of trouble.

Particularly do I regret the conduct of the Liberal Party. Between us and the orthodox Socialists there is a great doctrinal gulf, which yawns and gapes. Of this continental conception of human society called Socialism, or in its more violent form Communism, I shall say more later. There is no such gulf between the Conservative and

National Government I have formed and the Liberals. There is scarcely a Liberal sentiment which animated the great Liberal leaders of the past which we do not inherit and defend. Above all, there is our championship of freedom at home and abroad. All the guiding principles of the British Constitution are proclaimed and enforced by us in their highest degree.

When could any Liberal Party in the past have been offered a political programme of social reform so massive, so warm, so adventurous as that which is contained in our Four Years' Plan? Indeed, I feel that Mr. Gladstone would have recoiled from a great deal of it. He would have thought it was going too far. But we still have a Rosebery and a Lloyd-George to carry forward the flags of their fathers.

Why, then, should the Liberal Party spurn us? Why then should they leave the fighting line? Why could not they, at any rate, stay with us till we have beaten down the cruel domination of Japan and until we have set on foot some tolerable way of life for agonized Europe? I am sorry to tell you that they have yielded to the tactical temptation, natural to politicians, to acquire more seats in the House of Commons, if they can, at all costs. It is also obvious that the more equally the two large parties can be brought together at the polls, the greater will be the Liberal bargaining power. That is, no doubt, why all the criticisms of the Sinclair-Beveridge Liberals, who have been very active against us, are directed upon us. It is us they abuse.

I am sorry, indeed, to see such a line developed by men and women who are my friends, by a party many of whose ideals I cherish and will always strive to achieve or guard to the best of my strength. I do not wonder at all that a very large part of the Liberal Party have chosen the national course and still remain in office with us, bearing the heavy burden.

But I appeal to Liberals in all parts of the land, and I call upon them to search their hearts as to whether their differences with a British Government which will put through the Four Years' Plan, a Government, is animated by the love of freedom, which is vowed to that harmonious medium of justice and generosity so befitting to the conqueror, has not more claim on their ancestral loyalties than has a Socialist Party administration, whose principles are the absolute denial of traditional Liberalism. Let them think it out carefully in the light of the speeches of the famous Liberal leaders of the past. Let them think it out carefully in the warmth which may come to the weary Liberal combatant when he sees his ideas increasingly accepted by enlightened peoples and victorious nations.

My friends, I must tell you that a Socialist policy is abhorrent to the British ideas of freedom. Although it is now put forward in the main by people who have a good grounding in the Liberalism and Radicalism of the early part of this century, there can be no doubt that Socialism is inseparably interwoven with Totalitarianism and the abject worship of the State. It is not alone that property, in all its forms, is struck at, but that liberty, in all its forms, is challenged by the fundamental conceptions of Socialism.

Look how even today they hunger for controls of every kind, as if these were delectable foods instead of war-time infliction and monstrosities. There is to be one State to which all are to be obedient in every act of their lives. This State is to be the arch-employer, the arch-planner, the arch-administrator and ruler, and the arch-caucus-boss.

How is an ordinary citizen or subject of the King to stand up against this formidable machine, which, once it is in power, will prescribe for every one of them where they are to work; what they are to work at; where they may go and what they may say; what views they are to hold and within what limits they may express them; where their wives are to go to queue-up for the State ration; and what education their children are to receive to mould their views of human liberty and conduct in the future?

A Socialist State once thoroughly completed in all its details and its aspects - and that is what I am speaking of - could not afford to suffer opposition. Here in old England, in Great Britain, of which old England forms no inconspicuous part, in this glorious Island, the cradle and citadel of free democracy throughout the world, we do not like to be regimented and ordered about and have every action of our lives prescribed for us. In fact we punish criminals by sending them to Wormwood Scrubs and Dartmoor, where they get full employment, and whatever board and lodging is appointed by the Home Secretary.

Socialism is, in its essence, an attack not only upon British enterprise, but upon the right of the ordinary man or woman to breathe freely without having a harsh, clumsy, tyrannical hand clapped across their mouths and nostrils. A Free Parliament - look at that - a Free Parliament is odious to the Socialist doctrinaire. Have we not heard Mr. Herbert Morrison descant upon his plans to curtail Parliamentary procedure and pass laws simply by resolutions of broad principle in the House of Commons, afterwards to be left by Parliament to the executive and to the bureaucrats to elaborate and enforce by departmental regulations? As for Sir Stafford Cripps on "Parliament in the Socialist State," I have not time to read you what he said, but perhaps it will meet the public eye during the election campaign.

But I will go farther. I declare to you, from the bottom of my heart, that no Socialist system can be established without a political police. Many of those who are advocating Socialism or voting Socialist today will be horrified at this idea. That is because they are short-sighted, that is because they do not see where their theories are leading them.

No Socialist Government conducting the entire life and industry of the country could afford to allow free, sharp, or violently-worded expressions of public discontent. They would have to fall back on some form of *Gestapo*, no doubt very humanely directed in the first instance. And this would nip opinion in the bud; it would stop criticism as it reared its head, and it would gather all the power to the supreme party and the party leaders, rising like stately pinnacles above their vast bureaucracies of Civil servants, no longer servants and no longer civil. And where would the ordinary simple folk - the common people, as they like to call them in America - where would they be, once this mighty organism had got them in its grip?

I stand for the sovereign freedom of the individual within the laws which freely elected Parliaments have freely passed. I stand for the rights of the ordinary man to say what he thinks of the Government of the day, however powerful, and to turn them out, neck and crop, if he thinks he can better his temper or his home thereby and if he can persuade enough others to vote with him.

But, you will say, look at what has been done in the war. Have not many of those evils which you have depicted been the constant companions of our daily life? It is quite true that the horrors of war do not end with the fighting-line. They spread far away to the base and the homeland, and everywhere people give up their rights and liberties for the common cause. But this is because the life of their country is in mortal peril, or for the sake of the cause of freedom in some other land. They give them freely as a sacrifice. It is quite, true that the conditions of Socialism play a great part in war-time. We all submit to being ordered about to save our country. But when the war is over and the imminent danger to our existence is removed we cast off these shackles and burdens which we imposed upon ourselves in times of dire and mortal peril, and quit the gloomy caverns of war and march out into the breezy fields, where the sun is shining and where all may walk joyfully in its warm and golden rays.

Our present opponents or assailants would be, I am sure, knowing many of them, shocked to see where they are going, and where they are trying to lead us. So they

adopt temporary expedients. They say, let us just nationalise anything we can get hold of according to the size of our majority and get the Bank of England into the hands of trustworthy Socialist politicians, and we will go ahead and see what happens next. Indeed you would see what happens next.

But let me tell you that, once a Socialist Government begins monkeying with the credit of Britain and trying, without regard to facts, figures, or confidence, to manipulate it to Socialist requirements, there is no man or woman in this country who has, by thrift or toil, accumulated a nest-egg, however small, who will not run the risk of seeing it shrivel before their eyes.

Mr. Greenwood said two years ago - and I rebuked him for it then - "Pounds, shillings and pence are meaningless symbols." All this "meaningless symbol" talk is very dangerous, and would enable a Socialist Government which had got control of the Bank of England to issue notes that would destroy the value of any scrap of savings or nest-egg that anyone had accumulated in this country.

The new National Government stands decisively for the maintenance of the purchasing power of the pound sterling, and we would rather place upon all classes, rich and poor alike, the heaviest burden of taxation they can bear than slide into the delirium of inflation.

I warn you that if you vote for me and those who are acting with me, we give no guarantee of lush and easy times ahead. On the other hand, you need not expect pounds, shillings and pence to become a "meaningless symbol." On the contrary, our resolve will be that what has been earned by sweat, toil, and skill or saved by self-denial shall command the power to buy the products of peace at an equal value in sweat, toil, and skill. We will also take good care against unfair rake-offs and monopolies, and we will protect the common man by law against them by controlling monopolies whose operation are any restraint on trade or oppressive to the smaller producer or distributor.

My friends, I have been forced into a discussion between the Socialist and individualist theories of life and government. That is because for the first time the challenge has been made, in all formality, "Socialism versus the rest." But now I must come back to the job which stands in front of us. What have we got to do? What have we got to do now?

We have to bring home the soldiers who have borne the brunt of the war, and make sure, by every scrap of strength and brains we possess, that they find waiting for them food, homes, and work. The Demobilization Scheme has been drawn up with all the advantages of seeing what mistakes were made last time. Mr. Bevin has worked out a scheme which aims at being fair and square between one soldier and another, besides avoiding undue complications. But what a terrific business he has left us to carry through!

And then you have to add to it that out of this demobilizing army has got to be formed at the same time a new army to go out and finish off, at the side of our American brothers, the Japanese tyrants at the other side of the world. Here is a tremendous task.

And then come along serious people who say that we have got to get our mills going to provide new clothes and articles of all kinds for home and for our export trade. And what about our food, of which we grow only about two-thirds, even under war-time pressure? We have got anyhow to buy food and raw materials oversea, and how are we going to pay for these? We gave our foreign investments largely to the common cause. We sold every asset we could lay hands on in that year, that memorable, grim year, when we stood alone against the might of Hitler, with Mussolini at his tail. We gave all and we have given all to the prosecution of this war, and we have reached one of the great victorious halting-posts.

Then we have our Four-Year Plan, with all its hopes and benefits, and with all the patient work that it means to pass it into law and bring it into action. All these are definite, practical, gigantic tasks. They will take every scrap of strength, good management, and, above all, good comradeship that we can possibly screw out of ourselves.

What a mad thing it would be to slash across this whole great business of resettlement and reorganization with these inflaming controversies of Socialistic agitation! How foolish to plunge us into the bitter political and party fighting which must accompany the attempt to impose a vast revolutionary change on the whole daily life and, structure of Britain! Surely at least we can wait till another Election? The world is not coming to an end in the next few weeks or years. The progress of free discussion can show whose fears or whose hopes are well founded. Can we not get Europe settled up, and Britain settled down? Before we plunge out on this hateful internal struggle, let us concentrate on practical and immediate action, and make sure that in gazing at the stars we do not fail in our duty to our fellow mortals.

On with the forward march! Leave these Socialist dreamers to their Utopias or their nightmares. Let us be content to do the heavy job that is right on top of us. And let us make sure that the cottage home to which the warrior will return is blessed with modest but solid prosperity, well fenced and guarded against misfortune, and that Britons remain free to plan their lives for themselves and for those they love.

Appendix 3

Functions of the MoI

Organisation of the Ministry of Information, undated but c. September 1941. Sir Walter Monckton's papers, Monckton Trustees, Bodleian Library, MT4.

The purpose of the MoI:

- a) To secure and disseminate news (including photographs, films, etc) of the activities of the Government as widely and freely as possible, subject to the exigencies of censorship.
- b) To watch and record changes in habit and opinion at home with a view to maintaining the integrity and spirit of the people; to guide habit and opinion in directions favourable to the political aims of the Government by the issue of information, instruction, and advice both direct and indirect.
- c) To watch and record changes in habit and opinion overseas...
- d) To present the British and Allied cause as widely and fully as possible to the world in all its aspects.
- e) To watch and check enemy news and propaganda in all countries and to counter the propaganda and to counter the news service to ensure that the British position and case is fully understood.
- f) To utilize to the fullest opportunity the existing channels available for influence opinion directly through:
 - (i) the press
 - (ii) broadcasting
 - (iii) films
 - (iv) posters and other forms of publications
 - (v) book, pamphlets and other publications
 - (vi) lectures and addresses
 - (vii) commercial and business contacts
- g) to conclude and keep under review arrangements for establishing communications throughout the world for the distribution of news or opinion to serve the needs of the Government.

Note: The Ministry also includes the Postal and Telegraph Censorship, but this is excluded from the scope of this memorandum.

Appendix 4

Public Opinion Polls

Table 1

Are you in favour of Mr. Churchill being invited to join the Cabinet? (May 1939)

Yes.....	56%
No.....	26
No Opinion.....	18

In *Public Opinion Quarterly* Vol. 4, March 1940, p. 80.

Table 2

1. Should Great Britain remain a member of the League of Nations?

Yes.....	11,090,387	No.....	355,883
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2. Are you in favour of an all-round reduction of armaments by international agreement?

Yes.....	10,470,489	No.....	862,775
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3. Are you in favour of the all-round abolition of national military and naval aircraft by international agreement?

Yes.....	9,533,558	No.....	1,689,786
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4. Should the manufacture and sale of armaments for private profit be prohibited by international agreement?

Yes.....	10,417,329	No.....	775,415
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5. Do you consider that, if a nation insists on attacking another, the other nations should combine to compel it to stop – (a) by economic and non-military measures?

Yes.....	10,027,608	No.....	635,074
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(b) if necessary, by military measures?

Yes.....	6,784,368	No.....	2,351,981
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League of Nations' Peace Ballot (1934). Figures quoted in Harold Nicolson, "British Public Opinion and Foreign Policy" *Public Opinion Quarterly* Vol. 1, January 1937, pp. 57-8.

Table 3

If another major European war breaks out do you think Great Britain will be drawn into it? (May 1937)

Yes.....	83%
No.....	17%
Don't know.....	1%

In *Public Opinion Quarterly* Vol. 4, March 1940, p. 77.

Table 4

Which of these statements comes nearest to representing your view of Mr Chamberlain’s policy of appeasement: it is a policy which will ultimately lead to enduring peace in Europe; it will keep us out of the war until we have time to rearm; it is bringing war nearer by whetting the appetites of the dictators. (February 1938)

Lead to enduring peace.....	28%
Keep us out of the war.....	46
Bring war nearer.....	24
No opinion.....	2

In Hadley Cantril, *Public Opinion 1939-1946*, (Princeton University Press, 1951) *Public Opinion 1939-1946*, p. 275.

Note that the ‘no opinion’ category for Tables Three and Four are surprisingly low. For most questions on policy during the war this category regularly ranged between 10 and 30%.

Table 5

Do you agree with Mr Chamberlain’s policy of appeasement? (March 5 and March 12 1938)

	Yes	No	No opinion
March 5.....	26	58	16%
March 12.....	24	56	20

In Cantril, *Public Opinion*, p. 275.

Table 6

Hitler says he has “No more territorial ambitions in Europe”. Do you believe him? (October 1938)

Yes.....	7%
No.....	93
Don’t know.....	0

In *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 4, March 1940, p. 78.

Table 7

Are you in favour of giving back any former German Colonies? (October 1938)

Yes.....	15%
No.....	85
Don't know.....	13

If "No", would you rather fight than hand them back?

Yes.....	78%
No.....	22
Don't know.....	9

In *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 4, March 1940, p. 77.

Do you favour returning any of her former colonies to Germany? (November 1937)

Yes.....	24%
No.....	76%
Don't know.....	2

In *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 4, March 1940, p. 77.

Are you in favour of giving back any former German colonies? (March 1939)

Yes.....	14%
No.....	78
Don't know.....	8

In *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 4, March 1940, p. 79.

Table 8

Do you believe Mr Eden was right in resigning? (February 1938?)

Yes.....	71%
No.....	19
Don't know.....	10

Do you agree with Mr. Eden's reasons for resigning? (February 1938)

Yes.....	69%
No.....	19
Don't know.....	12

In *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 4, March 1940, p. 78.

Table 9

Are you satisfied with Mr. Neville Chamberlain as Prime Minister? (October 1938 to May 1940)

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion or don't know
Oct '38.....	57.....	43 = 100.....	10
Nov '38.....	55.....	45 = 100.....	11
Dec '38.....	56.....	44 = 100.....	9
Jan '39.....	57.....	43 = 100.....	6
Feb' 39.....	87.....	13 = 100.....	15
Mar' 39.....	58.....	42 = 100.....	10
Apr '39.....	59.....	41 = 100.....	7
May '39.....	55.....	45 = 100.....	4
Jun '39.....	55.....	45 = 100.....	5
Jul '39.....	59.....	41 = 100.....	7
Oct '39.....	65.....	29.....	6 = 100
Nov '39.....	68.....	27.....	5 = 100
Dec '39.....	64.....	30.....	6 = 100
*Jan '40.....	56.....	32.....	12 = 100
*Feb '40.....	59.....	30.....	11 = 100
*Mar '40.....	57.....	36.....	7 = 100
*May '40.....	33.....	60.....	7 = 100

* The question asked was: In general, do you approve or disapprove of Mr. Chamberlain as Prime Minister?

In Cantril, *Public Opinion*, p. 96.

Table 10

Would you favour a new political grouping including members of parliament from all parties under the leadership of Mr Eden? (November 1938)

Yes.....	40%
No.....	39
No opinion.....	21

In Cantril, *Public Opinion*, p. 276.

Table 11

If Mr. Chamberlain retires, whom would you like to be next Prime Minister? Asked of current supporters of the Government. (March 1939)

Eden.....	38%
Halifax	7
Churchill.....	7
Hore-Belisha.....	2
Duff Cooper.....	2
Hoare.....	2
Lloyd George.....	1
Others.....	2
Don't know, no opinion.....	35

In Cantril, *Public Opinion*, pp. 279-80.

Table 12

If Mr. Chamberlain were to retire whom would you like to succeed him as Prime Minister? (March 1940)

Eden.....	28%
Churchill.....	25
Halifax.....	7
Attlee.....	6
Others.....	23
Don't know, no opinion.....	35

In Cantril, *Public Opinion*, pp. 279-80.

Table 13

If you had a choice between Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Churchill, which would you have as Prime Minister? (December 1939)

Chamberlain.....	52%
Churchill.....	30
No choice.....	18

In Cantril, *Public Opinion*, p. 280.

Table 14

In general, do you approve or disapprove of Mr. Churchill was Prime Minister?

	<i>Approve</i>	<i>Disapprove</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
July '40	88	7	5
Oct '40	89	6	5
Nov '40	88	7	5
Jan '41	85	7	8
Mar '41	88	7	5
*Jun '41	87	9	4
Oct '41	84	11	5
*Dec '41	88	8	4
*Jan '42	89	7	4
Feb '42	82	11	7
Mar '42	81	13	6
Apr '42	82	13	5
May '42	87	8	5
Jun '42	86	9	5
July '42	78	15	7
Aug '42	82	11	7
*Sept '42	82	10	8
Oct '42	83	11	6
Nov '42	91	7	2
*Dec '42	93	5	2
Jan '43	91	7	2
Apr '43	90	7	3
*Jun '43	93	4	3
*Aug '43	93	5	2
*Nov '43	91	6	3
*Jan '44	89	7	4
*Mar '44	86	10	4
**Apr '44	88	9	3
**Jun '44	91	7	2
**Aug '44	89	8	3
*Sept '44	89	8	3
**Oct '44	91	7	2
*Jan '45	81	16	3
*Feb '45	85	11	4
Mar '45	87	10	3
**Apr '45	91	7	2
May '45	83	14	3

* The question was asked simply: Do you approve or disapprove of Mr. Churchill as Prime Minister?

** The question was: On the whole, do you approve or disapprove of Mr. Churchill as Prime Minister?

In Cantril, *Public Opinion*, p. 106.

Table 15

Attitudes to Churchill’s leadership of the Conservative Party. Percentage of people who thought it was:

	Men	Women	Total
Good thing.....	59%	60	60
Bad thing.....	19	6	12
No opinion.....	22	33	28

In Mass-Observation File Report 496, *Popular Attitudes to Politics in Wartime*, 20th November 1940.

Table 16

Attitudes to Cabinet Changes. People who thought the changes were:

An improvement and a good thing.....	29%
An improvement.....	21
Did not go far enough.....	14
Were unnecessary.....	1
Had no opinion.....	35

In Mass-Observation File Report 1111, *Opinion of the Cabinet Changes*, 24th February 1942.

Table 17

Attitudes to Cabinet Changes:

	Men	Women	Total
Very pleased.....	11%	14	13
Pleased.....	50	40	45
Wait and see.....	3	0	1
Displeased.....	8	6	7
Not go far enough.....	14	0	7
Vague/not heard.....	14	10	27

In Mass-Observation File Report 1111, *Opinion of the Cabinet Changes*, 24th February 1942.

Table 18

Readers and non-readers of the national morning press (1938).

Class of Person		Read a National Daily	Do not read
Men	A	78%	22
	B	74	26
	C1	66	34
	C2	58	42
Women	A	70	30
	B	69	31
	C1	54	46
	C2	39	61

In M.A. Adams, *The Home Market*, (George Allen and Unwin, 1939) p. 113. The class system was based primarily on family income but generally corresponded to professional classes, such as solicitors and doctors in Class A, higher civil service and managers in Class B, semi-skilled workers in Class C1 and unskilled workers in C2. Abrams, p. 145.

Table 19

Would you mind telling me what are your political views?

	Men	Women	Total
Left	45%	27	36
Middle	4	7	6
Right	11	1	6
No party	8	1	5
Government	2	5	3
Don't know	29	58	44

In Mass-Observation File Report 1333, *Satisfaction with the Prime Minister*, 1st July 1942.

Table 20

Has the war changed your political views at all? If yes, in what way have they changed?

	Men	Women	Total
Views changed.....	41%	28	35
More Left.....	25	10	18
More right.....	2	6	1
Other and vague.....	12	9	11
Don't know.....	1	4	2
No change.....	59	77	68

In Mass-Observation File Report 1333, *Satisfaction with the Prime Minister*, 1st July 1942.

Table 21

By-elections in which Common Wealth candidates stood with percentage of vote cast.

Date	Place	Winning candidate and percentage of total vote	Losing candidate and percentage of total vote
10th February 1943	Ashford	Conservative 69.7%	Common Wealth 30.3
11th February 1943	Midlothian and Peeblesshire	Conservative 51.9	Common Wealth 48.1
16th February 1943	Portsmouth	Conservative 59.7	Common Wealth 40.3
23rd February 1943	Watford	Conservative 53.9	Common Wealth 46.1
7th April 1943	Eddisbury	Common Wealth 43.7	National Liberal 41
20th April 1943	Daventry	Conservative 45.9	Common Wealth 33.4
1st June 1943	The Hartlepoons	Conservative 64.1	Common Wealth 17.4
8th June 1943	Newark	Conservative 44.2	Ind. Progressive 31.1 Common Wealth 13.9
9th April 1943	Birmingham Aston	Conservative 72.5	Common Wealth 21.6
7th January 1944	Skipton	Common Wealth 44.9	Conservative 44
8th July 1944	Manchester Rusholme	Conservative 53.3	Common Wealth 42.1
26th April 1945	Chelmsford	Common Wealth 57.5	Conservative 42.5

In F.W.S.Craig, *Chronology of Parliamentary By-Elections, 1833-1987*. Parliamentary Research Services, 1987.

Table 22

Britons in all walks of life were questioned on what they thought of the proposal for a state-controlled insurance plan to which they, and their employers, would contribute and which would guarantee all sick and unemployed adults two pounds per week. (British Institute of Public Opinion poll, 10th December 1942)

In favour.....	70%
Opposed.....	16
No opinion.....	14

In *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Spring 1943, p. 175.

Table 23

Attitude to the likelihood that the Government would implement Beveridge’s proposals:

	During the debate*	After the debate
All would be adopted.....	49%	34
Some would be adopted.....	31	25
None would be adopted.....	20	41

* Government debate on the Beveridge Report, 16th – 18th February 1943.
In Mass-Observation File Report 1673, *Social Security and Parliament*, 5th May 1943.

Table 24

In general (on the whole) are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the government's conduct of the war?
(BIPO polls January 1940 to May 1945)

Date	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Don't know
Jan 1940	56	46	8
Feb 1941	59	19	13
May 1941	53	38	9
Jun 1941	58	30	12
Oct 1941	44	38	18
Mar 1942	35	50	15
Apr 1942	50	38	12
May 1942	63	24	13
Jun 1942	57	26	17
July 1942	41	42	17
Aug 1942	45	38	17
Sep 1942	41	37	22
Oct 1942	49	35	16
Nov 1942	75	17	8
Dec 1942	75	19	6
Jan 1943	72	20	8
Feb 1943	81	12	7
Apr 1943	76	15	9
Jun 1943	75	13	12
Aug 1943	81	12	7
Oct 1943	81	12	7
Nov 1943	74	17	9
Jan 1944	69	16	15
Mar 1944	70	19	11
Apr 1944	78	12	10
May 1944	75	16	9
Jun 1944	80	13	7
Aug 1944	79	13	8
Sep 1944	86	8	6
Oct 1944	81	12	7
Jan 1945	72	20	8
Feb 1945	77	14	9
Mar 1945	83	12	5
Apr 1945	86	9	5
May 1945	87	10	3

Compiled from Cantril, *Public Opinion, 1935-1951*, p. 1108, Home Intelligence Reports INF1/292 and *Public Opinion Quarterly* 1940-1945.

Table 25

Do you think it would be a good or bad thing for Mr. Churchill to go on being Prime Minister after the war is over?

	June 1941			19 th Nov 1942	8 th Feb 1944
	Men	Women	Total	Total	Total
Good thing.....	45%	35	40	38	28
Bad thing.....	45	35	40	45	62
No opinion.....	10	29	20	10	17

Question asked in November 1942 and February 1944. No details exist of the exact question asked in 1941 but it was along similar lines. Mass-Observation File Reports 749, *Further Notes on Hore-Belisha and Churchill*, 23rd June 1941 and 2024 *News Quota Questionnaire*, 8th February 1944.

Table 26

Would you mind telling me your main reason for voting the way you did? Asked of those who had voted in the last election. (26th August 1945)

Labour

Best for the working class; belief in socialism; the best party; it stood for what I wanted; I am a party member; they promised us so much	51%
Has the best housing, post-war foreign policy	9
Have always voted Labour, my husband voted Labour	9
Hate the Tories; the Tories have made a mess of things; Churchill not the man for peace; against capitalists' interests	11
Would have voted Liberal if there had been a candidate	1
It was time they had a chance; I wanted to see a change	19

Conservative

It is the best party; admiration for Churchill	41%
Business reasons; will keep taxes down	5
Fear or dislike of socialism; Labour not fit to govern	17
Against state control, nationalisation; belief in private enterprise; freedom	9
Conservatives won war; let them win peace	10
Has the best housing, post-war employment, foreign policy	8
Have always voted Conservative; my husband voted Conservative	10

Liberal

The middle way; against extremes	40%
Beveridge; social security	8
Have always voted Liberal	16
Because my husband (or other relative) voted Liberal	3
It is the best party	33
Miscellaneous	6%

In Cantril *Public Opinion, 1935-1951*, pp. 196-97.

Table 27

In general, did you approve or disapprove of the way the election campaign was conducted by the various parties?

Approve.....	41%
Disapprove.....	42
Don't know.....	17

What are your reasons for disapproving? Asked of the 42% of the sample who said they did not approve of the way the election campaign was conducted by various parties.

Too much heckling ad interference at meetings; too many vote-catching stunts; too much mud-slinging; too little stress laid on policy by all parties.....	39%
Conservatives made it appear that Churchill was a candidate for each constituency; Churchill versus Labour; unfair boost of Churchill's war record; too much Churchill; too little policy.....	11
Too much mud-slinging, personalities, by Tories; too little policy; Tory scares, tricks, red-herrings obscured the real issues.....	11
Register incomplete; inefficient organisation.....	10
This is no time for an election.....	6
Lies and deceit by Labour party; rowdyism; breaking up of meetings by Labour party.....	4
General criticism of Churchill's speeches.....	3
Too many soldiers still away, unable to vote.....	2
Attack on Laski.....	2
Criticism of broadcast speeches generally.....	2
Too much bias and mud-slinging by press.....	1
Unfair distribution of broadcasts.....	1
Miscellaneous.....	4
No answer; don't know.....	4

In Cantril, *Public Opinion 1935-1951*, p. 196.

Appendix 5

Newspaper Circulation

Cecil King to Lady Cripps, 18th April 1942, from Cecil King, *With Malice Toward None*, (Sidgwick and Jackson, 1970) pp. 311-313.

Dear Lady Cripps,

I thought you might be interested in the enclosed material about the papers read by men and women under the 41. The conclusion is that the Daily Mirror and the Daily Express are by far the most important papers in this age group. The Express group is the creation of Beaverbrook, and though the staff is in many ways more competent and even brilliant than that of any other newspaper, the directing head in every way is Beaverbrook. E.J. Robertson is the executive head of the business in his chief's absence, but the various editors have lots of independence. Christiansen, the editor of the Daily Express, is not much interested in politics, and, in any case, I expect he is kept under a tighter rein than the others because of the greater importance of the paper. Second to Robertson is Plummer, whom I think very capable in a broader way than most newspaper people. John Gordon, the editor of the Sunday Express, is now the ablest of the Sunday paper editors and his weekly article is very popular indeed.

The policy of the Daily Mail group depends entirely on Esmond Rothermere. He finds it difficult to keep interested in any subject for long, so the papers he manages tend to pursue a rather erratic course.

The Daily Herald is controlled by the T.U.C. – at present its policy is therefore in the hands of Walter Citrine. Cudlipp, the editor, was formerly the head of the Standard and is very able. His leaders cause the Government more annoyance than anything else in the entire Press.

The News Chronicle and Star are virtually owned by Cadbury. He takes little interest in the papers as long as they pursue a quasi-Liberal policy. Sir Walter Layton used to direct the policy of the paper, but now this seems to be left to a considerable extent to the editor, Gerald Barry.

The Telegraph is owned, as you know, by Lord Camrose who entirely dictates its policy. His eldest son, now MP for Hitchin, has in the past at times had a say in the policy of the paper and it has then taken a less weak and subservient line. Camrose also dominates his younger brother Kemsley and the policy of the Sketch tends to follow that of the Telegraph, though recently they have at times diverged as it is reported that Churchill and Kemsley are not personally on good terms.

Of the Sunday papers, the News of the World has overwhelmingly the largest sale and its policy is determined by Major Davies, the editor, and chairman of the company. The paper never takes a definite line on anything – nor does the People, which has the second largest Sunday sale and whose policy is controlled by Lord Southwood. Of the other Sunday papers, the Sunday Times, Graphic, Chronicle and Empire News are controlled by Lord Kemsley to whom I have already referred. The Observer has recently ejected Garvin and is said to be largely owned by David Astor, Lord Astor's youngest son. Reynolds sometimes takes a bold and definite line. It is owned, as you know, by the Co-operative movement, but Alfred Barnes, MP is said to control the policy.

The sale of the various papers may not be familiar to you so I will set them down roughly below.

Daily Express	2,700,000
Daily Mirror	1,900,000
Daily Herald	1,600,000
Daily Mail	1,450,000
News Chronicle	1,200,000
Daily Sketch	700,000
Daily Telegraph	650,000
Times	180,000
News of the World	4,500,000
People	3,500,000
Sunday Pictorial	1,900,000
Sunday Express	1,700,000
Empire News	1,400,000
Sunday Dispatch	950,000
Sunday Chronicle	950,000
Sunday Graphic	700,000
Reynolds' News	500,000
Sunday Times	350,000
Observer	200,000

The daily newspaper figures are given before the recent cut of 10% in newsprint rations. Most of the papers cut their sales by 10%; some cut their number of pages, and it would be hard to say what sales are now – roughly 10% below the figures given. Some of the Sunday newspaper figures are approximate, as their exact sales figures have not been given by the proprietors for a considerable time.

Appendix 6

Candidates' literature in Newark by-
election, June 1943

Every vote for Shephard
is a vote for Churchill

Vote for Shephard,
Churchill and Unity

Every vote against Shephard
is a gift to Goebbels

Vote for Shephard and
Responsible Government

Shephard is Churchill's Man:
Send him to Churchill

SHEPHARD

X

NEWARK BY-ELECTION

MR. SIDNEY SHEPHARD, M.C.

NATIONAL CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE

supported by
the Official Labour, Liberal and Liberal National Parties



POLLING DAY

TUESDAY, 8th JUNE, 1943

Enter Hall
Near NEWARK
North

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Through the arched arch of the Oaks of Richmond and the verdant expanse of war-torn Member Lord Trenchard to the House of Lords. Newark is called upon to elect a new representative for the Constituency.

Under the Party Trust, which is honoured by the three great Parties, the Liberal or Conservative and Labour Party, and I have been honoured by their choice and by the official support of the Liberal and Labour Parties.

This is an important election. The eyes of all parts of this Country and of the world are focussed on Newark to-day.

If you return the National Candidate, the world will say: "All is well where is National Unity in Britain."

Mr. Churchill has made it clear that we cannot afford to waste our energies in political bickering. The three political parties agreed on this at the beginning of the War. They lost and felt rightly that our National Unity was the only way in which Hitler and his gang would eventually break.

We have just won a great victory in North Africa. Any time now we may invade the fortress of Europe. Never was it more necessary to unite for the complete and final complete defeat and unconditional surrender of our Axis Forces.

You will desire to know my political views, which are:

1. I stand for the complete prosecution of the War until the Victory is won, and the full and loyal support of Mr. Churchill and his Party (all men).

2. I uphold the maintenance of strong Armed Forces as being necessary to ensure Future Peace.

3. I believe in the principle of Empire Unity.

4. I support the Newbridge Plan in principle and subject only to being based on sound finance.

5. I support all measures of National or International character aimed at securing full employment of our National or economic life.

6. I believe in the maintenance of a prosperous Agriculture, and good wages for Agricultural workers. Our war has been dependent on our farmers and farm workers during the War, and Agriculture must never again be neglected.

7. I support the right of people to improve and live better for the future.

8. I stand for the abolition of slums in town and country in regard to West priority, and the provision of the necessary amenities of civilisation—electricity and piped water, and sanitation to all parts of the area.

9. I support all measures for all ex-service men and women, and adequate pensions for the disabled.

10. And lastly, I stand for the continued and progressive betterment of the Nation.

I have lived in this Division for the past sixteen years and have taken an interest in the Social and Political life of the Country.

I am pleased to serve you in Parliament, and on a wide and varied experience, cordially appeal for your support. If elected I will endeavour to serve the Factors of Newark irrespective of Party, class or Creed.

I appeal to you, Mr. responsible Elector, whatever your Political views, whether you are Conservative, Labour or Liberal, to support me as the National Government Candidate.

This is your great opportunity to show your gratitude to Mr. Churchill and your confidence in the Government.

Polling Day is on Tuesday, 8th June, 1943. Make a special effort to vote in person, and record your vote in my favour.

I am, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Yours faithfully,

Sidney Shephard



TOM PEPPER'S

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I have been pressed by a large number of electors in the Newark Parliamentary Division to stand as Liberal Independent Candidate in the forthcoming By-election, and having intimated my acceptance have been gratified to see this decision endorsed at public meetings. I have now the honour to put before you the policy for which I stand.

SUPPORT FOR THE PRIME MINISTER. In the successful prosecution of the War, I shall give Mr. Churchill my unqualified support—support which was not forthcoming for him from the Tory Party in the immediate pre-war years when he was pointing to the danger-spot. Having excluded him from office for so many years, the Tory Party is now attempting to "cash in" on his popularity. This is, in my opinion, an attempt to make Party capital out of the war. My support to Mr. Churchill will have no such motive, and in any and every measure designed to bring the war to a quick and successful conclusion, I shall back him whole-heartedly.

AGRICULTURE. As the only Candidate before you with direct associations with this great and important industry, I feel specially qualified to stress the need for a vigorous agricultural policy. I am opposed to the confiscation of land. I want to see agriculture made prosperous under private enterprise, and I want to see an end to any penalty against success—such as increased rents and insecurity of tenure. After this war we must not let this industry down as it was let down after the last war—by a House of Commons in which (but for two brief periods) there was always a majority of Tories. I regard it as being of paramount importance to the prosperity of Britain that British agriculture should flourish—the farm-worker should be properly paid and housed, and the farmer should have a fair return for his efforts and so enabled to fulfil this first condition without detriment to himself. From 1936 to 1938 I had the honour to serve on the Liberal Parliamentary Committee on agriculture, and the meetings of this body in the House of Commons gave me considerable insight into the problems that have to be tackled and solved. This, together with the fact that I am in daily contact with agriculturalists, and have spent my whole life in the countryside, enables me to come before you as one who has your problems at heart.

THE BEVERIDGE PLAN. I support the whole of the Beveridge Plan and will press for its adoption in its entirety—not piecemeal as the Tory 1922 Committee wants—for it all hangs together and if its object (the abolition of want) is to be achieved it must not be knocked to pieces. Added to the present plan I want to see provision for the IMMEDIATE introduction of full-scale pensions, the provision of a widow's pension, and the safeguarding of the position of those employees of Insurance and Friendly

ELECTION ADDRESS.

Societies who would lose their jobs when the scheme becomes operative. These should be taken into the Ministry of Social Security to administer the Scheme. The clause concerning the small one-man business should be amended to exclude the present limitation of benefits.

POST-WAR PLANNING. The problems of the post-war world have to be faced NOW. Included in my policy in this respect are:—

- (i) We must make sure, by planning, that those at present serving have a decent job to return to, and that those demobilised last have their pay adjusted so that they are at no financial disadvantage.
- (ii) There must be no mass unemployment after the war. Exploitation has to be avoided, and post-war planning must be designed to achieve these objects.
- (iii) Housing conditions must be improved. Slums must go, and in rural districts water and sanitation (which should be a charge on the national, not the local exchequer) must be provided. We must not repeat the mistake on re-building in congested areas.
- (iv) Our educational system needs improving to provide for equality of opportunity. It is a loss to the nation every time a child, through its parents' poverty, is denied the right to however high an education its ability merits.
- (v) Industrial development should provide that premises constructed outside congested areas should be converted from war-time to peace-time production. Round these sites, allied to the housing question, should be constructed garden suburbs to house the workers.
- (vi) Freedom must be restored with the cessation of hostilities. We are suffering to-day because of too much interference by Government Departments—interference which has become necessary to some extent as a result of war conditions. Much of that interference, through the method of its application, is stifling effort to-day. There is no justification for its continuance after the war.

CONCLUSION. I have lived among you all my life. Your interests are my interests. If you feel that the aims and objects stated in this address are worthy, and if you feel that it is desirable that the Division should be represented BY A MAN WHO IS ONE OF THE PEOPLE OF THE NEWARK DIVISION you will record your vote in my favour. If you do so, I shall be at all times available to meet you and discuss your problems, and to voice your wishes in the House of Commons—for my aim will be SERVICE.

Yours sincerely,

The Butts,
Bingham Road,
Radcliffe-on-Trent.

TOM PEPPER.

Printed by R. Wright & Sons, Radcliffe-on-Trent, Notts., and Published by J. Lynch, Agent for J. T. Pepper.

**I, ALAN LLOYD DAWRANT, OFFER MYSELF AS YOUR
INDEPENDENT PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATE
FOR THE NEWARK DIVISION BY-ELECTION**

HERE IS MY POLICY:

SUPPORT FOR THE PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Churchill came forward in the dark days and gave us confidence and faith. We trust him as our Leader.

That he should have become Leader of the Tory party, however, is regrettable. With the people behind him I feel he might well have remained independent of sectional Tory interests. Even so, so long as he continues to put maximum effort into the winning of the War, I pledge him my full support.

INDUSTRY

I believe in the nationalisation of natural resources and utilities which operate for the benefit of everyone. Here I include armaments, mines, transport, electricity, gas, water. These undertakings should operate for the service of the public and not for profit. They should be made efficient so as to give good service and pay decent living wages. Ordinary industry should be planned and guided by the State. The operations of Combines and Monopolies which aim only at profit, often to the detriment of employment, must be controlled rigidly. I would advocate some form of Excess Profits Tax after the War, worked out on a basis which is fair and equitable. The present basis which allows certain inefficient firms to make big profits out of the War effort is wrong.

AGRICULTURE

We must work for the nationalisation of land. This will mean an end of appreciation of capital values, rent rackets and unused large estates. Something like the present War Agricultural Committees must continue after the War, with proper representation of the agricultural workers. Pending nationalisation of land, and the securing of more efficiency and planning of crops through Agricultural Committees, we must give the farmer protection so that he gets a fair reward and so that the Farm Worker is assured of a decent living wage which is comparable to that of the industrial worker.

HOUSING

The Government must realize that it is useless to play around with this question. All slums must go and all the villages must have proper houses with adequate light, water and drainage. We must realize that money spent on these projects is an investment which will amply repay us in the years to come by creating the best form of wealth for all—healthy, strong citizens.

SOCIAL SERVICES

I stand for the adoption of the Beveridge Plan as a minimum NOW. I go further, and say that the old folk and children should receive benefits now and not have to wait 20 years. I favour the New Zealand method of raising the money, by collecting on a graduated scale from income. Those who have more pay more. On this basis there is no difficulty whatsoever in meeting the cost and no one is overburdened by the payment.

I believe in equal opportunities for Education regardless of class distinction.

THESE ARE THE MOST VITAL POINTS OF MY POLICY: We must start to work now so that our children, at least, may grow up under better conditions. We have years of work ahead of us and PERSISTENCE must be our watchword.

When elected to serve you—I promise

1. To give true representation and assist in any problem or worry which you, as citizens, may have.
2. To meet my Constituents at regular intervals to report on my activities.
3. To call meetings as occasions arise when matters of major or national importance need to be discussed.

VOTING FOR DAWRANT means

Representation of the People—by the People—for the People

Every Vote counts. May I count on yours on Polling Day

SEE ENCLOSED CARD FOR FULL DETAILS.

ALAN L. DAWRANT

Published by W. J. BROWN, M.P., Election Agent for ALAN L. DAWRANT, 41 Chesham, Newark.
Produced and Printed by CHADWICK-LATZ LTD., Publicity House, Dyott Street, London, W.C.1.

Appendix 7

Churchill's Letter to By-election candidate



10, Downing Street,
Whitehall.

21 May, 1941.

Dear Captain Gammons,*

I am sorry to learn that when you come forward at this critical time to support the National Government, you find yourself opposed at Hornsey by a candidate who offers the electors a war-plan of his own. The national unity, which was so remarkably proved by the recent all-party vote of confidence in the Government, should not be ruffled even for a moment by a frivolous by-election candidate.

I am sure that the electors of Hornsey will feel that this resolute War Government, with the aid of our ablest officers, are more likely to be able to choose the right course than Mr. Pemberton Billing.

10, Downing Street,
Whitehall.

As this appears to be the only issue raised by your opponent in this unnecessary contest, I hope and believe that Hornsey will give you a sweeping majority. I ask everyone to consider it part of their duty to cast their vote and thus prove to the world that the nation is united behind His Majesty's Government.

*Yours sincerely,
Louis Mountbatten*

Captain L.D. Gammons

Appendix 8

Churchill's speech at Walthamstow

**Text of Churchill's speech at Walthamstow, 3rd July 1945 taken from Gaumont
British News newsreel.** Taken from description of the newsreel, www.itnarchive.com.

"Are we downhearted (boos & cheers) I am only holding this hat up in order to shield my face from the rays of the sun, but I should like to see what is possible of you having regard to the very great differences involved." ... "But Ladies & Gentleman, it is a serious ...if interruptions are made with the opportunity and intention of stopping me speaking. Nothing is easier than to prevent me speaking, but you're only in advice of doing that if you will do it yourself without totalitarian...established by Hitler & Mussolini."...

..."I've got plenty of time to do that! There has been a gentlemen on my left who keeps on...about politics in the first place to beat Japan." (Boos & cheers)...

..."Our United States came over here in millions to help us and to break the power of Hitler & we must stand by them in them in their fight at the other end of the world which is also important to be our battle too."...

..."As we only grow between a half and two-thirds of the food we require to keep ourselves alive, even on the present scale, as we only grow about under two-thirds, we have to buy it from over the sea, and our Merchant Seamen bring it here, but in order to pay for it we have to develop our export trade and also to buy the raw materials which are not grown in this country. Therefore a great effort is made and has to be made on all these points, on all these points, and when we are asked what is our policy I can only tell you that an enormous amount of work (BOOS & YELLS) ...I am sorry that one hurt, there you are, we cannot help it, I didn't mean it to hurt you gentlemen who feel it so much, but the advantage human heart & human head will have to be made before we can adapt a full and glorious utopia which Socialist wool-gatherers placed before us. (BOOS & CHEERS) I shall call them hence-forward in my speech, a very good name for them, the booing party...Have another one (BOOS & CHEERS) Any help from this side. Whether you look at the picture of our deeds abroad in the war or the use we made of our victory after it, was one you the people will be able to say in future time, they did a fine job of work."(applause)

