

WINSTON CHURCHILL

*British Bulldog*

*His Career in War and Peace*

EMRYS HUGHES



A BANNER BOOK

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## *Introduction*

Winston Churchill has been the most colorful and picturesque leader of the British Tory Party since Benjamin Disraeli. For half a century he has been a challenging figure in our public life. After the outbreak of the Second World War he became as well known in Europe and America as at home, and his admirers regard him as the greatest Englishman of our time. During the war it became almost treason or sacrilege to criticize Mr. Churchill. He was regarded as the voice of Britain, the great heaven-sent leader who had emerged in our dire peril to save us and guide not only Britain but the Western and democratic world to victory over the forces of darkness.

No wonder the Tory Party, in its desperation, decided to cash in on his wartime reputation as our deliverer. Indeed, he was about the only asset the discredited postwar Tories had, and they have played him up, with his manifest approval, to the limit of their ability.

So there has grown up a Churchill legend: of Churchill the one and only national leader who is capable of being the head of a British Government in difficult times, of a man who was always right in the years prior to the war and who during the war guided us with supreme wisdom. The Tories have done their best to bask in his reflected glory, forgetting that the harshest and truest things Winston Churchill ever said in his life were about them.

But there is more to be said about Winston Churchill than is to be found in his own many volumes on war and politics, his autobiographical reminiscences, and the adulatory biographies that have been published in recent years.

Mr. Churchill has contributed copiously to the history of our time, and, of course, no man can really be expected to be completely objective about himself. The prima donna is not the most reliable critic of her own performances. Reading Mr. Churchill's

memoirs is very much like reading an appreciative drama review written by the actor who has also played the part of hero in the production. Mr. Churchill's war books are, in the main, justifications and apologia for his own performances.

Now, nobody will deny that Winston Churchill has been pugnacious, courageous, an outstanding personality, a champion all-in wrestler in the political conflicts of his day, that his speeches have been eloquent and have stirred the multitudes, that he has a great command of the English language, that he can tell a good story, that he has a gay versatility and a sense of humor and other qualities which appeal to a large number of the British people, even to many who would rather be carried out of the polling booth dead than vote for him or any of his Tory candidates.

But, when we are asked to regard him as the modern Moses, the one and only political leader who can lead us out of the wilderness into the Promised Land, and to look upon that political fairy tale produced under his auspices, called *The Right Road for Britain*, as the new Ten Commandments, it is time to demur. Although it may be argued that Winston Churchill led us to victory, it is obvious that we are still far from being out of the wilderness. Indeed, it looks as though all that has happened is that we have been led into another wilderness in which the voice of Winston Churchill is again heard calling upon us to be prepared for yet another world war in which there will still be more blood, sweat, toil and tears, and in which we may all be destroyed by atom bombs.

Two members of Mr. Churchill's wartime Cabinet, Lord Hankey and Mr. Ernest Bevin, have frankly admitted that the slogan of "unconditional surrender" was disastrous and left the successors of Mr. Churchill a shambles in Europe still to be cleared up when the hymns of victorious thanksgiving had been sung. Mr. Churchill's V sign was rather premature. The war, we understood him to say, was to crush dictators, to end totalitarian rule, to end the tyranny of the secret police, and to free people from concentration camps. Yet he is now telling us in his *Triumph and Tragedy* that all these evils, far from being ended as a result of

our victories, continue even to a greater degree behind the Iron Curtain which now stretches half over Europe and Asia.

For the most part, all that Winston Churchill can think of, today, is the prospect of a further war of liberation by atomic bombs, and to urge us to be prepared for World War III under the banner of the Atlantic Pact, NATO, E.D.C., etc., which guarantees our safety and security in much the same way as we guaranteed that of Poland in 1939. This prospect seems of late to have offered Mr. Churchill something less than calmness and assurance, and he has proposed to "go to Canossa" and seek a truce with the dictators of Soviet Russia. The stockpile of Russian atom bombs is too close to England for comfort or safety.

Looking out upon Western Europe today, with its ruined cities and towns, its formidable economic problems, its political complexities, its uncertain future—all under the shadow of the Kremlin—we are not so sure that Mr. Churchill is the "conquering hero" he was when the Nazi regime ultimately collapsed. We now know that, if civilization is to survive, pugnacity, like patriotism, is not enough. Certainly it is no substitute for the foresight, wisdom, constructive statesmanship, and a real understanding of the new and more difficult social, economic and international problems of our age that a political leader should possess.

Our Tories are, of course, doing their utmost to perpetuate the Churchill legend, the myth of the inspired leader, because they have a vested interest in it. But, as I have tried to show in this book, if Churchill's political judgment has always been right, theirs has almost always been wrong.

This is not the sort of admiring biography of which we have had so many in recent years. It is rather a corrective and an antidote. Those who want hero worship of Winston Churchill will find any amount of it in the public libraries and in the secondhand bookshops. Mr. Churchill's own case is to be found in great detail in his many books. He has always been a voluminous writer; more volumes are still coming from his pen, each in turn hailed by his admirers as the latest historical and literary masterpiece, and his six volumes of war memoirs have been closely followed by his

receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature for 1953. No doubt these will continue to be read and discussed for many years to come as the views and the comments of one of the leading figures in the drama of great events. When some future Gibbon comes to write a monumental classic on *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire* he will find abundant firsthand material for study in the books of Winston Churchill.

Nobody can deny that Churchill has done his utmost to present to the world his side of the story. But there is another, and this book is an attempt to outline some parts of it.

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