

PART THREE

Between Two World Wars

CHAPTER XIII

Out of Parliament

The popularity of the Lloyd George coalition and its principal figures declined quickly. The soldiers returned home to discover that "the land fit for heroes to live in" that had been promised in Lloyd-Georgian perorations was a mirage. Instead, many of them found no jobs, and the windows of the pawnshops were soon filled with war medals.

There was serious industrial unrest, especially in the coalfields, and the Government sidetracked the miners, first by appointing a royal commission to inquire into the case for the nationalization of the mines, and then shelving its recommendations.

Ireland was seething with rebellion; repression had failed and was followed by the terrorism of the Black and Tans. The Liberal press was bitterly critical. The radical Left Wing of the Liberal Party was going over to Labour.

Lloyd George and Winston Churchill, who had been the platform heroes of the British democracy a decade before the war, were now regarded as the mouthpieces of "the hard-faced men who had done very well out of the war." They had dug the grave of the great Liberal Party, a section of which, under Asquith, was also in opposition. Lloyd George and Churchill were desperately

eager to keep the coalition in existence as a National Government in opposition to Socialism.

In the country, the I.L.P., which had opposed the war, was carrying on a vigorous propaganda, and Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden were now listened to respectfully by audiences which had, during wartime, howled them down. A new type of trade-union leader had emerged, and the T.U.C. had become an active political force, hostile to the Coalition Government and inclined to sympathize with the mood of the Russian Revolution.

Strongholds of the Liberal Party like South Wales and the Clyde were seething with industrial troubles and swinging over to Socialism. Their alliance with the Tories in the Coalition Government had ended the claims of the Liberals to speak for the masses. Lloyd George and Churchill were no longer attacking the landlords and the big vested interests in their public speeches, but were attacking Socialism instead. They wanted the coalition to continue indefinitely.

But the Tory central office had a different idea. The split between Asquith and Lloyd George had weakened the Liberals, and the Tory caucus was determined to get rid of Lloyd George and his followers and have complete control of the government itself. Britain had been on the brink of war with the Turks over the Chanak crisis, with Winston pursuing a line of action that nearly precipitated another war with Turkey.

The Tories held a party meeting at the Carlton Club with Stanley Baldwin taking a strong anti-Lloyd-George line that ended the coalition. Churchill was eager to have a center party with Austen Chamberlain and Birkenhead in it. But the Tories would have none of it. Bonar Law was called upon to form a government, and the general election followed at the end of 1922.

Churchill went back to Dundee to fight as a Liberal and a free-trader. But Dundee was now interested in other things than free trade, and the Liberal Party and its shibboleths no longer roused enthusiasm. Winston labelled himself National Liberal and had the local Tory support as he ferociously beat the anti-Bolshevist and anti-Socialist drum. Edward Scrymgeour, the Prohibitionist

candidate, stood again; the Labour candidate was E. D. Morel, and William Gallacher stood as Communist.

Churchill was now on the defensive. E. D. Morel, a former Liberal, was an eloquent speaker with a wide knowledge of international affairs. He knew the diplomatic history of the war and how it had come about. Every speech Morel made was a devastating criticism of war. In Europe, he said, all the governments had pursued policies which had led their peoples to the slaughter, and he presented a vigorous indictment of Churchill's blunders during the war. If Morel omitted anything, Gallacher supplied it with a double dose of vitriol. Scrymgeour was a local personality with a strong religious backing, and he was anti-Churchill, too.

Winston was handicapped by the fact that he had just undergone an operation for appendicitis and was late in the field. But he snarled back. Socialism and Communism were the same twin-headed monster. "Mr. Gallacher," he said, "is only Mr. Morel with the courage of his convictions" (Gallacher had been in jail) "and Trotsky is only Mr. Gallacher with the power to murder those whom he cannot convince." Trotsky had once referred contemptuously to Winston and the latter never forgot it. Perhaps, later on, this was one of the points on which he could cordially agree with Stalin. Trotsky was certainly the bloodthirsty ogre of Churchill's orations at this time. But he could no longer sway Dundee. The result was—

Scrymgeour (Prohibitionist)	32,578
E. D. Morel (Labour)	30,292
D. J. Macdonald (National Liberal)	22,244
Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill (National Liberal)	20,466
W. Gallacher (Communist)	6,682

Churchill's majority of 15,700 in the khaki-coupon election had been wiped out, and he was beaten by 10,000 votes. It was a bitter blow to him. He never returned to Dundee. He left the country to recuperate in Italy and Spain, to paint, to curse Bolshevism and Socialism in newspaper articles, and to write his history of the First World War.

The Tory Government elected in 1922 did not last long. Bonar

Law died, and he was succeeded by Stanley Baldwin, who decided to go to the country to ask for a mandate for a policy of tariffs and imperial preference. This reunited Lloyd George and Asquith on a free-trade platform, and Winston, still proclaiming himself a Liberal, fought West Leicester. The result was—

F. W. Pethick Lawrence (Labour)	13,634
Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill (Liberal)	9,236
Capt. A. Instone (Independent)	7,696

There was to be no comeback as a Liberal. There was no Liberal revival; the Liberal star had set. Asquith and his followers numbered only 158 in the new Parliament; the Tories had gone down from 347 to 255. The Labour Party had now 191 seats. The country had decided against the Tory policy of protection, and the Liberals decided to give their support to the first Labour Government, which, under Ramsay MacDonald, took office without power. They were entirely dependent on the good will of the Liberals, and that was not destined to last very long.

Winston surveyed the political scene and came to the conclusion that, after some twenty years, it was time to depart from the Liberal fold. On January 17, 1924, he sent a letter to the press denouncing the Liberal Party's decision to allow a minority Labour Government to go into office. According to Churchill, the Labour Party "was innately pledged to the fundamental subversion of the existing social and economic civilisation, and organised for that purpose and that purpose alone. Strife and tumults, deepening and darkening, will be the only consequence of minority rule."

Winston was now all for co-operating with the Tories. Hysterical, violent anti-Socialism had suddenly become one of Winston's dominant traits. During the war, in a speech at Dundee he had called for an all-out effort to win the war. "For this purpose," he had said, "our whole nation must be organised [cheers], must be socialised if you like the word, must be organised." That was to win the war. Why should Winston have been scared about similar methods in order to win the peace? Even he, at an election at Dundee, had advocated the nationalization of railways without delay.

After all, had he not, in the later stages of the war, been

Minister of Munitions, a ministry which had come into existence to control and regulate and increase the production of armaments when it was deemed necessary by the wartime Government to prevent private enterprise from gross profiteering in a time of national need? He had boasted of the enterprise and success of the Ministry of Munitions when he was at its head. Why, then,



"Anti-Sosh" leader, 1924

Low

should he have been scared stiff at a moderate Labour Government under Ramsay MacDonald, with the Liberal Party holding the balance of power and able to defeat it if it pursued extreme policies?

The Conservative Party had not changed since he had described it as "a party of great vested interests, banded together in a formidable federation." Indeed, it had become rather more so. What had become of the great social-reform program that Churchill had outlined on innumerable platforms before 1914? He had once compiled a selection of his social-reform speeches under the title *Liberalism and the Social Problem* in a book to which the radical journalist H. W. Massingham had contributed an introduction.

Did Winston really believe that the Conservative Party had fundamentally changed and had become the great hope of democracy? He had denounced the House of Lords; he had poured acrid scorn on the Tory Party and its leaders and all its works. Was he really convinced that the Tory Party had been born again? Or was he just thinking in terms of his own political career and, realizing that the Labour Party and the Socialists had no place for him, making his way back into the Tory Party because it was the only party which could offer him a place in the political limelight and prospects of office again? Later on, Churchill was to attempt an apologia in a newspaper article entitled "Consistency in Politics," pointing to the different British politicians who had changed their parties and even citing the case of "the hapless Ramsay MacDonald" in his own defense. But none of the politicians he referred to had done a political somersault twice in a generation. None of them had twice seen the light on the road to Damascus.

Winston had expounded the principles of Liberalism in West Leicester as late as December, 1923, but by the middle of January, 1924, he was making desperate efforts to be recognized by the conservative head office as their official candidate at the by-election in the Abbey Division of Westminster caused by the death of a Tory M.P., Brigadier General Nicholson. Feelers had been put out to the Tory Party leaders, and things had almost been fixed up, when the local Tory association upset the arrangement by nominating a nephew of the late member. But Winston had the support

of Balfour, Austen Chamberlain, and Lord Birkenhead. The Tory Party in the House wanted him back so that he could make vitriolic attacks on the Labour Government, but the local Tory diehards would not give way. Winston, however, thought he could capture the seat. He issued a statement which reeked of humbug. "If I thought the present Conservative candidate represented the force of character of the constituency I should not have come forward as a candidate." What nonsense!

All that Winston wished for was to get into Parliament. The local Tories circulated the story that he declined to join the Conservative Party. To this he replied, "I do not think it would be right of me to change like that for the purpose of securing an easy return to Parliament." (He did so officially to become the Tory candidate for Epping a few months later.) He declared that he had spent the last twenty years fighting Socialism and protection (he did not include the Tory Party). "If I am able to co-operate cordially with the Conservative Party," he added, "it is not because I have changed my position. It is because they have very wisely and rightly returned or are in process of returning to a broad and progressive platform!"

There was not the slightest actual sign of this. The Tories were no more progressive than they had been when he had referred to them as standing "for sentiment by the bucketful, patriotism by the imperial pint, the open hand at the Exchequer, the open door at the public house, dear food for the million, cheap labour for the millionaire." The "broad and progressive platform" existed only in Winston's imagination. But it was as good a line to take in appealing for the Tory vote as anything else. As the Tories' nominee had called himself the Conservative candidate, Winston had to think of something else. "Liberal Conservative" still sounded contradictory, and "Independent Conservative" was not a good label either. So he stood as a "Constitutionalist"—which could mean anything but sounded super-patriotic.

Winston always believed that an election should be run very much like a circus, and his supporters ranged from heavyweight boxers to Daly's chorus girls and Mayfair ladies. While he was deeply impressed with "the force of character" of the Westminster

division, he thought it would be better with a touch of Barnum and Bailey's show. But he was beaten by the Conservative candidate by 43 votes. Captain Nicholson was returned and passed into Westminster and out of history, to the mortification of Winston, who had hoped for a spectacular and theatrical comeback. The result was—

Captain Nicholson (Conservative)	8,187
Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill (Constitutionalist)	8,144
Fenner Brockway (Socialist)	6,156
Scott Duckers (Liberal)	291

Winston had to attack the MacDonald Government not from the front Opposition bench but from outside. In a few months' time he had become the candidate for what was regarded as the safe Tory seat of Epping.

When the Labour Government proposed a treaty with Russia, Churchill's anti-Socialist orations touched a high note of vehemence. He became deeply concerned about religion in Russia. Speaking at Epping he said that in Russia it had been made a criminal offense to teach religion to any child under fifteen years of age, and these were the people, the Labour Party said, the English were to give forty millions to enable them to go on with the good work. It made him sick. The two democratic republics of France and the United States were not doing this, but Britain was asked to lend this money in order to curry favor with "the blood-dyed tyrants of Moscow."

By September he was addressing the Scottish Conservative Club at Edinburgh, and delighted the Scottish Tories with a blood-curdling anti-Russian oration. He said that the Russians had to be left to solve their problems. Britain could leave it to the good sense of her businessmen to trade with them when opportunity offered, but she should not go out of her way to give special aid and succor to a regime that was criminal in its origin and aims, and that sought the destruction of civilized institutions all over the world. (Cheers.) There had never before been any treaty like the present one; where was the name of the King? He suggested that it was not out of regard for the feelings of the sovereign, although many of his relatives had been massacred by the Bolshevik Government,

that the treaty did not bear the King's signature; rather, to soothe the feelings of the Russian dictators Britain was sacrificing and ignoring her great and venerable constitution in order to conform to the fads and whims of Moscow.

The Zinoviev-letter* election was one after Winston's own heart, and he rose to great oratorical heights in a speech at Lough-ton, where he denounced Ramsay MacDonald for tampering and tinkering with the Russian Bolsheviks and "demonstrating a sense of comradeship with the foul, filth butchers of Moscow":

They write from their Praesidium, or centre of control, in order that germ cells shall be established in our regiments and on our ships, that propaganda shall be developed in our streets and villages. They write to order that preparations shall be made for bloody revolt to be started and for civil war, flames, and carnage to disturb and defile our streets. They write to order these things in this country at the very moment when they are here discussing with the British Government a treaty for a loan, asking for more of our money. I say such a situation has never occurred in the history of this country. [Loud cheers.]

Dr. Goebbels never did better than this.

* This letter, played up by the Tories in the October, 1924, election, was alleged to have been written by Gregory Zinoviev, Bolshevik leader in charge of Soviet propaganda abroad, to British Communists urging them to prepare for the Communist revolution in England. The Tories attacked the Labour Party vigorously, charging that they had provided full liberty—indeed, license—for Communists to carry on their revolutionary propaganda in Britain. Later, the Zinoviev letter was proved a forgery, but by that time it had done its damage to the Labour cause and had served the purposes of Tory campaign propaganda, having played an important part in Labour's rebuff in the election.

CHAPTER XIV

Tory Chancellor

Churchill's vehement anti-Russian campaigns and his violent attacks on the Ramsay MacDonald Government soon made the Tories forget his Liberal past. Only Lord Birkenhead could rival him as a vituperative orator, and Birkenhead was an earl operating in what Churchill had politely described as a Punch and Judy show.

Birkenhead sent a message to Epping urging the electors to return Churchill as "the greatest House of Commons man living." Austen Chamberlain supported him because "the old quarrels of Liberal and Conservative belong to the past." They were all anti-Socialists now. The old Liberal Party was as good as dead. At the General Election of 1924 they kept only forty seats.

The farcical Zinoviev-letter scare, the anti-Bolshevik stunts, the unscrupulous misrepresentation of the Russian treaty—which had been described as giving British money to murderers, whereas it actually guaranteed payment to British landholders whose property had been confiscated in Russia, and was designed to help trade with Russia as well as to restore normal diplomatic relations—all helped to whip up eve-of-the-poll panic, and the Tories found themselves returned with a large majority of 211 over all parties.

By his platform oratory and his anti-Bolshevik and anti-Socialist fulminations Winston had worked his passage back into the Tory fold. He was one of their conquering heroes now, and his reward was the Chancellorship of the Exchequer in Baldwin's Government. This was the surprise of the new ministry. The story went around that Baldwin had meant to invite Winston to become Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster but that he had accepted the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. The older Tories gasped. This would never have happened under Bonar Law. It was time that the prodigal son return, but was it necessary to overdo the welcome home and entrust him with the very custody of the Golden Calf?

It was recalled that Winston's father, Lord Randolph Churchill, had once been Chancellor of the Exchequer and that he was puzzled by the decimals—what were "the damned dots"? What the qualifications of Winston Churchill were for the office of the Chancellor of the Exchequer nobody knew. If he had gone to the Admiralty or to the War Office nobody would have been surprised; that was his life, but at the Treasury—what was Winston Churchill likely to do there?

The Tories were now in an overwhelming majority and could do as they liked. They had fought the election on a scare and stunt anti-Socialist policy and had not the slightest conception of a positive program of reconstruction. All they knew was that they had to carry out the dictates of the real rulers of the country—High Finance and Big Business.

The City of London financiers wanted a return to the gold standard; the Treasury experts recommended it; and so Winston Churchill automatically decided upon it as the main feature of his first budget. The charitable explanation of his decision is that he was blissfully ignorant of its economic consequences and of the devastating effect his action was going to have on British trade and industry.

During the war Britain had gone off gold. That had not been one of the things that had worried Churchill then. The value of the pound had fallen so that it was only worth 90 per cent of its pre-war value. The financiers of the City (London's "Wall Street") were desperately eager to maintain London as the financial center of the world. The return to the gold standard was in their interests.

But it was a different matter for the export trades. Even with the pound sterling at its 1924 level, merchants were having difficulties in selling their goods in continental markets. With the pound worth 18 shillings, their difficulties were worsened by the return to gold, for the overseas customer would have to pay 20 shillings for the goods that had been costing 18 shillings. The return to the gold standard meant that the British exporter could only retain his customers by cutting his price. This meant, in turn, that the export trades had to reduce costs of production, and British capitalists know only one way of doing this—reducing wages.

This had not been an issue at the general election. The British workers who had voted Tory, supposedly in order to save themselves and their children from the bloodthirsty Bolsheviks, had done so in entire ignorance of the fact that the first thing that the new Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer would do would be to introduce a financial measure which was to bring about a reduction in their wages and was to be the prelude to years of mass unemployment, years of untold misery and wretchedness for the British working class. The Zinoviev election had been a fraud, the people had been duped and deluded, and they were to pay the inevitable penalty of this ignorance and folly for years.

The economist John Maynard Keynes, who had written a historic warning that the economic consequences of the reparations policy of the Versailles Peace Treaty were likely to be disastrous, was now to point out what were likely to be the "Economic Consequences of Mr. Churchill," and he did so in a brilliantly convincing little pamphlet whose predictions were to be fulfilled to the letter. He declared that the return to the gold standard was certain to involve unemployment and industrial disputes. He wrote:

To begin with, there will be great depression in the export industries. This, in itself, will be helpful, since it will produce an atmosphere favourable to the reduction of wages. The cost of living will fall somewhat. This will be helpful too, because it will give you a good argument in favour of reducing wages. Nevertheless, the cost of living will not fall sufficiently and, consequently, the export industries will not be able to reduce their prices sufficiently, until wages have fallen in the sheltered industries. Now, wages will not fall in the sheltered industries merely because there is unemployment in the unsheltered industries.

Therefore, you will have to see to it that there is unemployment in the sheltered industries also.

The way to do this will be by credit restriction. By means of the restriction by the Bank of England, you can deliberately intensify unemployment to any required degree until wages do fall. When the process is complete the cost of living will have fallen too; and we shall then be, with luck, just where we were before we started.

This was precisely what happened. The first victims were the miners. The coal-owners, faced with competition from the Continent, including the coal from Germany that was part of the reparations that were being exacted under the peace treaty, decided that they must cut miners' wages. Keynes stated the issues bluntly:

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has expressed the opinion that the return to the gold standard is no more responsible for the condition of affairs in the coal industry than the gulf stream. These statements are of the featherbrained order. "Why should coal miners suffer a lower standard of life than other classes of labour? They may be lazy, good-for-nothing fellows who do not work so hard as they should. But is there any evidence that they are more lazy or more good-for-nothing than other people?"

On grounds of social justice, no case can be made out for reducing the wages of the miners. They are the victims of the economic Jugger-naut. They represent in the flesh the fundamental adjustments engineered by the Treasury and the Bank of England to satisfy the impatience of the City fathers to bridge "the moderate gap" between \$4.40 and \$4.86. *They*, and others to follow, are "the moderate sacrifice" still necessary to ensure the stability of the gold standard. The plight of the coalminers is the first but not—unless we are very lucky—the last of the economic consequences of Mr. Churchill.

The colliery owners propose that the gap should be bridged by a reduction of wages, irrespective of a reduction in the cost of living—that is to say by a [reduction of the] standard of life of the miners.

They are to make the sacrifice to meet circumstances for which they are in no way responsible and one over which they have no control.

Thus Mr. Churchill's policy of improving the exchange by ten per cent, was, sooner or later, a policy of reducing everyone's wages by two shillings in the pound.

In doing what he did in the actual circumstances of last spring, he was just asking for trouble. For he was committing himself to force down wages and all money values, without any idea of how it was to be done. Why did he do such a silly thing?

Partly, perhaps, because he has no instinctive judgment to prevent him from making mistakes; partly because, lacking this instinctive judgment, he was deafened by the clamorous voices of conventional finance; and most of all, because he was gravely misled by his experts.

Credit restriction is an incredibly powerful instrument, and even a little of it goes a long way—especially in circumstances where the opposite course is called for. The policy of deliberately intensifying unemployment with a view to forcing wage reductions is already partly in force, and the tragedy of our situation lies in the fact that, from the misguided standpoint which has been officially adopted, this course is theoretically justifiable. No section of labour will readily accept lower wages on the pressure of unemployment and of strikes and lockouts; and in order to make sure of this result we are deliberately intensifying the unemployment.

The return to the gold standard was the inevitable prelude to the miners' lockout and the general strike of 1926. Faced with the coal-owners' ultimatum—which involved a big reduction in wages—the miners appealed to the other unions organized in the T.U.C.

The general strike gave Churchill another opportunity for playing Napoleon. He reviewed the milk lorries assembled in Hyde Park, and he became the editor of the *British Gazette*, the paper which was run by the Government when the printers went on strike. The owners of the *Morning Post*, the most reactionary Tory paper, offered their plant and their premises to the Government, and the paper was produced by black-leg labor. His biographer Lewis Broad says: "I doubt if any editor can provide an equal to his increase in circulation. When it first appeared on May 5th some 230,000 copies of the *British Gazette* were circulated. On its final issue only eight days later the circulation was ten times larger." Mr. Broad omits to mention, however, that this was not just due to the editorial genius of Churchill but to the fact that, apart from a strike sheet run by the striking printers, no other paper was available except a diminutive edition of *The Times*.

Among Churchill's youthful ambitions was that of becoming a great newspaper editor. Now was the hour of another spectacular triumph. According to Hugh Martin, another biographer, "he went down to the offices of the *Morning Post* sternly resolved to do his duty." Next day, the *Morning Post* came out under the new name of the *British Gazette*, although its format and style were very much the same. It contained the following announcement:

Late last night important visitors to the Editor were announced, and into the Editorial Room marched the Chancellor of the Exchequer [Churchill], Sir Samuel Hoare [later Secretary for India] and Mr. J. C. C. Davidson [Chief Tory Whip] and a train of departmental officials. They had come to act on a suggestion of the Editor, to commandeer on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the *Morning Post* and to convert it off hand into the Government news sheet the *British Gazette*. The staff, it was recorded, gave them "a frolic welcome."

For eight days Churchill gloried in the editorial chair of the *British Gazette* at the head of the *Morning Post* staff who, accustomed to turning out a bitterly anti-Socialist, anti-trade-union, anti-working-class paper, were having the time of their lives. It denounced the T.U.C, the miners and the Labour Party as enemies of the nation. It suppressed their point of view and quoted the story from a French newspaper that the strike was a sensational Russian plot.

A peace manifesto issued by the Archbishop of Canterbury was refused publication. The *Gazette* published distorted, highly colored reports of parliamentary debates with such references to M.P.s as "Mr. George Lansbury, a mild Socialist, passionate and shouting," etc. Lloyd George described the work of the *Gazette* in the debate that followed the general strike as "a first-class indiscretion, clothed in the tawdry garb of third-rate journalism."

The general strike collapsed; Churchill had triumphed, and the miners were slowly starved back to work. It was one of the longest and most disastrous work stoppages in British history, in which the miners and their wives and children suffered great hardship. Grim and sullen, the men finally had to go back to the pits. Years of poverty and unemployment lay ahead. Winston Churchill had been victorious in his war with the miners.

Even his most fervent admirers do not claim that Winston Churchill was a great Chancellor of the Exchequer; his critics declare that he was the worst. In his first budget, relief was granted to the high bracket tax-payers and the income tax was reduced from 4s. 6d. to 4s. in the pound.

High Finance and Big Business that had financed the Tories' general-election campaign received their reward. Not that Big Business was satisfied. Sir Alfred Mond, later Lord Melchett, head

of the great chemical combine, thought it was only robbing Peter to pay Paul, for although the income tax was reduced by £20,000,000 to stimulate industry, there was an item of £14,000,000 to be paid in contributions to pensions. For many years the Labour Party had agitated for widows' pensions. In his short term as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Snowden had done the preparatory work, and if the Labour Government had not been thrown out on the Russian-treaty issue, widows' pensions would have been in his 1925 budget.

Churchill took this over, realizing that it would make his rich man's budget look more progressive and enable him to pose as the widows' friend and to claim the credit for the Tory Party. Another feature of his budget was the restoration of the McKenna duties which Snowden, a rigid free-trader, had repealed. Winston put them back again, in spite of the fact that as late as the Abbey by-election he had declared that free trade was one of the fundamentals of his political faith. What did that matter now? He was a Tory Chancellor in a Tory Government. He was prepared to swallow tariffs at a gulp just as he had swallowed all the other Tory doctrines that he had assailed with such scorn when he was one of the Liberal spellbinders before the war.

In his next budget in 1926 he raided the Road Fund, i.e., transferred the £7,000,000 that motorists had paid in taxation for road-construction purposes to general expenditures. "Twelve months ago," was Snowden's comment, "I described the budget as a rich man's budget. Today I describe this budget as the budget of a profligate and a bankrupt."

CHAPTER XV

Salute to Mussolini

The spectre of Bolshevism still haunted Churchill's thoughts, and he conjured it up in nearly all his platform orations. The Russian Government was Enemy No. 1, and Churchill denounced it on every possible occasion. At the 1924 election the bearded Bolshevik with the bloodstained hands had been the Tories' greatest election asset, and Churchill was determined to continue to denounce the Labour Party as being in the grip of the Bolsheviks. It had been the most successful political stunt of the postwar years and Winston hoped to exploit it indefinitely. In a characteristic speech at the Alexandra Palace on June 20, 1926, he denounced the Bolshevik Government:

These miscreants, who have ruined their own country, are powerless in their efforts to ruin our country. In their plan of world revolution they found us an obstacle. If Russian Bolsheviks could only pull down Britain, ruin its prosperity, plunge it into anarchy, obliterate the British Empire as a force in the world, the road would be clear for a general butchery, followed by a universal tyranny of which they would be the heads and out of which they would get the profit. They will not succeed in their aim. [Cheers.]

They thought the same sort of stuff with which they bamboozled their own moujiks would suit Britain. They are always expecting to

wake up and find that we are cutting each others' throats for their benefit. They have their dupes, they have their feather-headed hirelings and allies in this country, but they will be disappointed. His Majesty's Government understand exactly their aims and their methods. The Socialist Party in the House of Commons are now labouring to prove that the Russian Government had nothing to do with the sending of money to foment the General Strike. But what are the facts? The Russian Trade Government, the Third International, and the Russian Trade Unions are all of them only off-shoots of the Russian Communist Party. The inner committee of the Communist Party is the sole central governing, controlling body in Russia. It is the real Cabinet of Russia. They work all the marionettes. They animate and direct every part of the diabolical machinery which is in action all over the world. When they know the hand that fires the pistol, what does it matter which finger pulls the trigger?

The Government are under no illusions. I have heard the question asked several times, and it is a perfectly fair question: "Why do you let them stay here? Why do you not throw them out?" [Cheers]

I am sure it would give me a great deal of satisfaction if they were thrown out. Personally, I hope I shall live to see the day when either there will be a civilised Government in Russia or that we shall have ended the present pretence of friendly relations with men who are seeking our overthrow. . . .

Does not all this show what a folly Mr. Lloyd George committed when he brought these Russian intriguers into our midst? It was one of those fatal downward steps in his career. I did my best to persuade him from it.

But we must not allow our policies to be unduly swayed by our feelings [*sic!*]. We have decided, under careful survey, without allusion to the whole position that the present time is not the time when we should take the step of rupturing the negotiations and relations.

Even the *Daily Express* thought that Winston had gone too far and remarked (June 21, 1926) that his language "was such as would draw a protest from any other foreign government in the world."

Three days after that speech the Government produced a Blue Book based on documents which had been seized in a police raid on the Communist Party offices nine months before. Lloyd George delivered a scathing attack on this new "exposure of Bolshevism." "Trade which runs into millions," he exclaimed, "£34,000,000 last year—and it will be more when we take what we want in the way of timber and other essential commodities from Russia—trade

which is growing year by year is to be thrown away for this miserable abortion of a book."

In striking contrast to the bitter hatred he continually expressed of the Bolsheviks was Churchill's servile adulation of Mussolini. He had denounced the Bolsheviks as dictators. But was not Mussolini a dictator too? Had not Mussolini seized power by the forcible overthrow of democratic institutions in Italy? Had his Fascist braves not clubbed, castor-oiled, and murdered their political opponents?

Nevertheless, Winston Churchill made no secret of his warm and sincere admiration of Mussolini and his methods. In this he joined hands with eminent Americans like Nicholas Murray Butler, who declared that Mussolini was probably the greatest statesman of the twentieth century, and Owen D. Young, who, in the depression years, was asserting that the United States needed a Mussolini to solve its economic and political problems. Hitler was later to pay his tribute in his *Mein Kampf* to "that great man across the Alps"; but Churchill did it first. Mussolini was the first of the Fascist dictators, and had he not succeeded in Italy it is doubtful whether the methods which Hitler copied and improved would have been used in Nazi Germany.

In January, 1927, Churchill paid Mussolini a complimentary visit at Rome and received a hearty welcome from the Italian dictator, whose press gave Winston lavish praise and publicity. After having been feted for a week by Mussolini, he gave a press conference at which he extolled the achievements of his friend. *The Times*, January 21, 1927, reported it as follows:

Before leaving for London today Mr. Churchill received representatives of the Italian and foreign press. Mr. Churchill informed his audience that he had prepared what he, an ex-journalist, considered the questions and answers most likely to help them in their work, and that a typed copy of this would be given to whomsoever desired one. The following are extracts in his own words from the impressions made upon him by a week's visit to Italy:

"You will naturally ask me about the interviews I have had with Italian statesmen and, in particular, with Signor Mussolini and Count Volpi. Those interviews were purely private and of a general character. It is a good thing in modern Europe for public men in different countries to meet on a friendly and social basis and form personal

impressions of one another. It is one of the ways in which international suspicion may be diminished, and frank and confident relations maintained.

"I could not help being charmed, like so many other people have been, by Signor Mussolini's gentle and simple bearing and by his calm detached poise in spite of so many burdens and dangers.

"Secondly, anyone could see that he thought of nothing but the lasting good, as he understood it, of the Italian people, and that no lesser interest was of the slightest consequence to him.

"I am sure that I am violating no confidence when I say that a large part of my conversations with Signor Mussolini and with Count Volpi turned upon the economic position of the Italian wage earner. . . . I was very glad to hear and to have it proved to me by facts and figures that there is a definite improvement month by month over the preceding year. . . .

"I have heard a great deal about your new law of corporations, which, I am told, directly associates twenty millions of active citizens with the State, and obliges the State to undertake very direct responsibilities in regard to these and their dependents. Such a movement is of the deepest interest, and its results will be watched in every country. In the face of such a system, ardently accepted, it is quite absurd to suggest that the Italian Government does not rest upon popular bases or that it is not upheld by the active and practical assent of the great masses.

"If I had been an Italian I am sure that I should have been wholeheartedly with you from start to finish in your triumphant struggle against the bestial appetites and passions of Leninism. But in England we have not had to fight this danger in the same deadly form. We have our way of doing things. But that we shall succeed in grappling with Communism and choking the life out of it—of that I am absolutely sure.

"I will, however, say a word on an international aspect of Fascismo. Externally, your movement has rendered a service to the whole world. The great fear which has always beset every democratic leader or working-class leader has been that of being undermined or overbid by someone more extreme than he. It seems that continued progression to the Left, a sort of inevitable landslide into the abyss, was the characteristic of all revolutions. Italy has shown that there is a way of fighting the subversive forces which can rally the mass of the people, properly led, to value and wish to defend the honour and stability of civilised society. She has provided the necessary antidote to the Russian poison. Hereafter, no great nation will be unprovided with an ultimate means of protection against cancerous growths, and every responsible labour leader in every country ought to feel his feet more firmly planted in resisting levelling and reckless doctrines. The great

mass of the people love their country and are proud of its flag and history. They do not regard these as incompatible with a progressive advance towards social justice and economic betterment."

In conclusion, Mr. Churchill referred to the policy of the British Government in Europe, which is "that Great Britain, France, Italy, and Germany should work together for the revival of Europe and to heal the wounds of the war."

The Times added next day:

Mr. Churchill's parting message has elicited enthusiastic comments from all the Fascist newspapers which speak of it as one of the most important judgments ever delivered on Fascismo by a foreign statesman, and they express confidence that it will have the most favourable effect on world opinion of Fascismo.

Mr. Churchill is congratulated especially on having understood the real spirit of the Fascist movement, an understanding in which, the newspapers declare, so many other observers of Fascismo have failed.



Fellow travellers, 1927

History has now revealed not only how Mussolini's political career began but also how it ended. Nobody now believes that Mussolini saved Italy. His foreign policy, though originally designed to revise the vindictive treaties after the First World War and to provide a four-power pact against Bolshevism and war, ultimately led the Italians to disaster and to defeat in war. In deference to historical truth, however, it should be pointed out that it was the stupid and bellicose diplomacy of Stanley Baldwin and Anthony Eden, which applied sanctions to Italy in connection with Ethiopia, refused to negotiate seriously on the problem, and rejected Mussolini's constructive four-power pact, probably even more statesmanlike than the Locarno agreement, which drove Mussolini into the Rome-Berlin Axis and the pact with Hitler.

Churchill's admiration of Mussolini was not just a passing affection. As late as September 26, 1935, he referred to Mussolini as "so great a man and so wise a ruler." But probably Winston's classic tribute to Mussolini was his statement that the world should be grateful to II Duce for saving it from "the foul baboonery of Bolshevism."

It is interesting to note that in the first volume of his war memoirs, *The Gathering Storm* (1948), Churchill has the following note on Mussolini:

While Corporal Hitler was making himself useful to the German officer-class in Munich by arousing soldiers and workers to fierce hatred of Jews and Communists, on whom he laid the blame for Germany's defeat, another adventurer, Benito Mussolini, provided Italy with a new theme of government, which while it claimed to save the Italian people from Communism, raised himself to dictatorial power. As Fascism sprang from Communism, so Nazism developed from Fascism. Thus were set on foot those kindred movements which were destined soon to plunge the world into even more hideous strife, which none can say has ended with their destruction.

Nobody would gather from this that Churchill had, in 1927, visited Rome and assured Mussolini that the latter had rendered "a service to the whole world." Churchill carefully omitted all reference to this visit and his eulogy of Mussolini from his history of the war.

When Mussolini was brutally murdered on April 29, 1945, and his body hung head down to be spat upon and showered with

garbage by the Italian mob in Milan, there is no evidence that Churchill shed any tears over the ignominious demise of his "great and good friend." Indeed, he announced the news by rushing into his dining-room and shouting to his guests: "Ah, the bloody beast is dead!" Nor, when peace had come and such an act would have been quite permissible and in good taste, did Churchill send any note of condolence to Mussolini's widow and tell her of his regret that "so great a statesman" had passed from the scene in so foul a manner. Churchill's words and actions at the time of Mussolini's death provide the acid test of the extent of his ideological consistency, sportsmanship, and gallantry.

The essential lesson of this episode is, of course, that Churchill could have had no ideological basis for promoting or fighting a war against Mussolini and Fascism. If he lost his affection for Il Duce after 1935, it could only have been because the latter mildly challenged British imperial interests in his Ethiopian foray. Indeed, Italian scholars have unearthed evidence that, in the spring of 1940, when it appeared that Franco-British defeat was inevitable, Churchill favored Mussolini's entry into the war in order to exercise a moderating influence over Hitler at the peace table—but he suggested that Mussolini direct his military efforts against Greece and the Balkans.

CHAPTER XVI

Nightmare Over India

The Baldwin Government lasted five years, and Churchill remained Chancellor of the Exchequer during that time. Election trickery may induce the masses to return Tory governments, but these governments, once in power, soon reveal themselves for what they are—governments of the landlord and capitalist classes obediently following the dictates of High Finance and Big Business. The elections are scarcely over before the people begin to realize what they have done and how they have been deceived. Between 1924 and 1929 the working classes paid the full price for Tory rule. Following the reduction in miners' wages, workers in other industries suffered too. These were chronic years of unemployment and short time, with over a million on the dole or on poor-law relief.

When the Baldwin Government went to the country in 1929 the Tories were defeated; Labour was again the strongest party, and the Liberals, though weaker, still held the balance of power and agreed to a Labour Government. Ramsay MacDonald became Premier for the second time. In Epping, Churchill's majority went down from 9,763 to 4,967 and an ex-Communist, J. T. W. Newbold, polled 6,472 votes. His Liberal opponent polled 19,005. In

a straight fight Churchill would probably have lost the seat. He was to be out of the Cabinet for ten years and out of step with the Tory Party too.

India was the first issue on which Churchill took his own line. He became the spokesman and the figurehead of the Right-wing Tory clique that wished to retain the grip of British imperialism on India and opposed concessions to the Indian National Congress and to Gandhi. If there ever was any genuine Liberalism in Churchill's mental make-up, there was no sign of it when any suggestion was made that the time had come for the British Government to yield to the demand in India for independence.

Lord Irwin, a Tory Viceroy, favored concessions in India, but Churchill denounced Irwin's policy as "misguided benevolence." He refused to contemplate "the casting away of that most truly bright and precious jewel in the crown of the King which more than all our other Dominions and Dependencies constitutes the glory and strength of the British Empire."

Winston could always produce this sort of schoolboy rhetoric by the yard, and the controversies over the Indian bill gave him unlimited opportunities. The mere mention of the name of Gandhi was enough to make him foam at the mouth. "The truth is," he told a meeting of diehards at the Cannon Street Hotel, "that Gandhi-ism and all that it stands for will, sooner or later, have to be grappled with and finally crushed. It is no use trying to satisfy the tiger by feeding it on cat's meat. . . ."

"The loss of India would mark and consummate the downfall of the British Empire. That great organism would pass at a stroke out of Life into History. From such a catastrophe there could be no recovery."

Churchill disagreed with Baldwin on this issue and ostentatiously left the Tory shadow cabinet, and there was a clash on the floor of the House. Baldwin, however, had the majority of the Tory Party behind him. At a meeting of businessmen at the Constitutional Club, Winston had an audience more to his liking. With an expressive sweep of his arm he exclaimed:

See what happens when you get upon the slippery slope; when, instead of the Conservative Party putting its hand on the brake, it puts its foot

upon the accelerator! Gandhi, with his deep knowledge of the Indian peoples, by the dress he wore or did not wear, by the way in which his food was brought to him at the Viceregal Palace, deliberately insulted—in a manner which he knew everyone in India would appreciate—the majesty of the King's representative.

These are not trifles in the East. Thereby our power to maintain peace and order among immense masses of India has been sensibly impaired. . . . But that is only the beginning. These are the first drops of the storm. Gandhi is resolved—and those who work behind him and through him are still more resolved—to bring practically all British importations, certainly all Lancashire importations, to an absolute end. That spells the doom of Lancashire. Unless you are prepared to defend your rights and interests in India you will be stripped of every vestige you possess and expelled with ignominy from its shores.

This was good stuff for the businessmen thinking of their shares in Indian companies, but even the Tory front bench thought it was out of date. Churchill's speeches of prophecy of doom in India were so frequent during the debates on the India bill that they became boring. In one final speech of denunciation, Winston reiterated all his histrionic prophecies of impending doom in India. He was followed by Leo Amery, also an arch-imperialist. Mr. Amery deflated Winston's rhetorical bladder. "Here endeth the last chapter of the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah," was his comment.

At a big demonstration in the Albert Hall, Churchill described the India bill as "a hideous act of self-mutilation, astounding to every nation in the world. I am against this surrender to Gandhi," he declared. "I am against these conversations and agreements between Lord Irwin and Mr. Gandhi. Gandhi stands for the expulsion of Britain from India. Gandhi stands for the substitution of Brahmin domination for British rule in India. You will never be able to come to terms with Gandhi." When Churchill talked about India in his feverish orations, the Brahmins for the time being took the place of the Bolsheviks. Everything good in India he attributed to the results of British rule:

Here you have nearly three hundred and fifty millions of people, lifted to a civilisation and to a level of peace, order, sanitation and progress far above anything they could possibly have achieved themselves or could maintain. This wonderful fact is due to the guidance and

authority of a few thousands of British officials responsible to Parliament who have for generations presided over the development of India. If that authority is injured or destroyed, the whole efficiency of the services, defensive, administrative, medical, hygienic, judicial, railway, irrigation, public works and famine prevention, upon which the Indian masses depend for their culture and progress will perish with it. India will fall back quite rapidly through the centuries into the barbarism and privations of the Middle Ages.

To abandon India to the rule of the Brahmins would be an act of cruel and wicked negligence. It would shame for ever those who bore its guilt.

The gulf between Hindus and Moslems is impassable. Over both of them the impartial rule of Britain has hitherto lifted its appeasing sceptre.

Churchill forecast that, if the British withdrew their army from India, the Hindus would be conquered by the Moslems:

The Brahmins know well that they cannot defend themselves against the Moslems. The Hindus do not possess among their many virtues that of being a fighting race. The whole South of India is peopled with races deserving all earnest solicitude and regard, but incapable of self-defence. It is in the North alone that the fighting races dwell. There can be no doubt that the departure of the British from India, which Mr. Gandhi advocates and which Mr. Nehru demands, would be followed first by a struggle in the North and thereafter by a re-conquest of the South by the North and of the Hindus by the Moslems.

He saw every disaster and evil under the sun following a withdrawal of British soldiers from India. And greatest horror of all he had read in *The Times*:

. . . of the crowd of rich Bombay merchants and millionaire mill-owners, millionaires on sweated labour [it sounded like a description of a Tory Conference] who summoned Mr. Gandhi, the saint, the lawyer, Lord Irwin's dear colleague and companion. What are they doing there, these men, and what is he doing in their houses? They are making arrangements that the greatest bluff, the greatest humbug and the greatest betrayal shall be followed by the greatest ramp. Nepotism, back-scratching, graft and corruption in every form will be the handmaiden of a Brahmin domination.

Winston was, however, to live long enough to see that his worst nightmares about disorder in India were not realized. But, by promoting Britain's entry into the Second World War and insisting

on continuing it after the German attack on Russia on June 22, 1941, Churchill's policy was more responsible than anything else for so weakening the British Empire that India had to be given her independence, and thus was lost "the brightest pearl of Empire." Churchill said during the war that he did not become the King's First Minister to liquidate the British Empire, but this is just what his foreign policy after 1938 accomplished.

Churchill had so overdone the Indian melodrama in his opposition to the India bill that the House of Commons ceased to take his fulminations very seriously. They were too much for the Tory back benches, and even the diehards became surfeited with his overdoses of rhetoric.

More and more, Winston came to be regarded as a lone wolf, a picturesque survival of the old Liberal-Tory years, a political flamboyant with no particular principles, a parliamentary careerist whose day was over. The Tory leaders laughed at his debating dexterity; they marvelled at his flow of language and his mastery of the tricks of the politician's trade; they liked him as an entertainer. He had many friends but few followers; they could appreciate the agility of the Westminster knockabout artist but did not regard him as one whose judgment was sound or whose leadership could be relied upon.

When the national coalition was formed after the financial crisis of 1931, Winston was not included in the new ministry. MacDonald certainly did not want him, neither did Baldwin; he was a doubtful asset in the country and would only be a nuisance in the Cabinet. So he was left out. He was regarded as a back number and reluctantly assumed the pose of the elder statesman in splendid isolation, ready and willing to offer his advice and services in any political crisis that might turn up. He was not slow to remind Baldwin that the latter had been the man responsible for the breakup of the Lloyd George coalition, "and therefore it is certainly surprising to find him the champion coalitionist."

But the same "honest Baldwin" was not so naïve as he looked. He had no doubts in his own mind what sort of a coalition this one was going to be and who was to be the top dog. Ramsay MacDonald was no Lloyd George and had entered the Tory spider's

parlor with far less assertiveness than the proverbial fly. They would get no trouble from him; he had burned his Socialist bridges behind him; the Tories could afford to let him remain the patriotic figurehead of the national government until the time came to remove him from the stage. Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden would be useful for the general election, and after that the Tories could come into the open and take control.

So, the great British democracy was fooled again. Winston increased his majority to 12,786 at the 1931 election but was not officially allowed anywhere near 10 Downing Street or Whitehall.

In Germany, Adolf Hitler came to power in January, 1933.

CHAPTER XVII

The Abdication

Churchill's most spectacular clash with Baldwin, however, came over the political issues involved in the abdication of King Edward VIII. When the young King had been installed as Prince of Wales at the Investiture at Caernarvon Castle in 1911, Winston Churchill had been present as part of his duties as Home Secretary, and in his ministerial duties had met the Prince frequently during the intervening years. The news of King Edward's relations with Mrs. Simpson were first made public on December 1, 1936.

The British press had kept silent on what had been widely publicized in America and in other parts of the world—that King Edward, whose coronation was to take place the following year, had become infatuated with an American lady who had already been divorced and was shortly to figure in divorce proceedings with Mr. Ernest Simpson. The American weekly *Time* had given the whole story great publicity in its columns, as had the sensational press of the United States. Mrs. Simpson had been with the King on innumerable occasions and had even been entertained at Balmoral.

The disclosure was made to the British public following an address critical of the King that had been delivered by Dr. Blunt,

Bishop of Bradford. The King had intimated to Mr. Baldwin, the Prime Minister, that he intended to marry Mrs. Simpson and thus precipitated a constitutional crisis. This had completely upset court circles, and vastly disturbed the Archbishop of Canterbury, who shuddered at the very thought of an American woman who had already had two husbands becoming Queen of England.

The King was apparently under the impression that he could marry Mrs. Simpson, in defiance of Mr. Baldwin and the Archbishop, and even seemed to have thought that if Mrs. Simpson would not be allowed to become Queen of England, Parliament would agree to pass legislation legalizing a morganatic marriage.

That he should have harbored these delusions is perhaps understandable. He had enjoyed great popularity as Prince of Wales and was the most praised and publicized personality in the country. In fact, in its efforts to strengthen British public opinion in support of monarchy, the press and the B.B.C. had made the young King into almost a demigod. He had been hailed as a national hero by enthusiastic crowds all over the country and had been acclaimed in the mining villages of south Wales and other Socialist strongholds. His journeys had been one long triumphant reception through cheering multitudes. As prince, Edward had become accustomed to this, and since he had become king it had all grown to one grand crescendo of adoration.

Every possible device of publicity had been employed to hypnotize the British public into the belief that Edward was probably the most wonderful king England had ever known. He had been photographed in almost every conceivable kind of uniform; he had been everywhere and had seen everything, and was represented to be a most versatile, gifted, democratic monarch. He had been trained for his great task and was the incarnation of all that was dashing and gallant, exactly the right man to be the ruler of a mighty empire. Who, then, were Baldwin and the Archbishop of Canterbury that they should dictate to him and object to the woman he wished to make his wife?

If Edward had decided on some foreign princess, however vacuous, they would all have declared that he had done the right thing and would have vied with one another in their fawning and

their flattery. Why could he not marry the woman of his choice, even if she were an American and had been divorced twice? Was he not doing enough for the country by going through all the conventional routine, appearing at innumerable functions, signing all the documents, dressing up in all sorts of uniforms, always doing the correct thing at the right time, and smiling, smiling, smiling, at lord mayors, and mayors and aldermen and their wives, and always having to pretend to look pleased and delighted. Why could they not let him please himself with his Wally, who had more life and brains and energy in her than all the royal crowd and the princesses who bored him to death?

Edward did not wish to abdicate and was quite prepared to go through with his royal duties. Even if they did not want Wally as queen, could Parliament not fall in with his wishes and pass legislation sanctioning a morganatic marriage? That was Edward's point of view, and he thought that he was popular enough in the country to be able, in the last resort, politely to tell Mr. Baldwin and the Archbishop of Canterbury to go to hell.

But he underestimated Stanley Baldwin, the stubborn, conventional Englishman who believed in Victorian morality and was determined that he was not going to bow the knee to any Wally Simpson or have her hovering around Buckingham Palace and giving the wrong advice to the King. Besides, if the King had his way on this matter, what effect would it all have upon the future of the British monarchy? Would it not lower its prestige? And if the monarchy fell into disrepute would it not imperil the British Constitution, that great bulwark against revolution, and imperil everything for which the Conservative Party stood?

So Baldwin was obdurate and unyielding, and backed up the Archbishop of Canterbury. It was the Prime Minister's duty to tender advice to the King, and his advice to the King was that his Government was not prepared to introduce legislation sanctioning a morganatic marriage, and that, if the King persisted in his intention to marry Mrs. Simpson, he would have to abdicate.

This advice was not what the King wanted. He suggested to Mr. Baldwin that he would like further advice from Mr. Winston Churchill. It is said that the Prime Minister raised no objection,

but he must have been astonished, for Churchill was not the leader of a party and was not regarded as a responsible elder statesman. But this development, far from deflecting Baldwin from the line he had taken, probably made him more determined than ever and prepared to roll up his sleeves and also polish off Winston Churchill if necessary.

When Baldwin had made his statement in the House, Churchill had intervened to ask the Prime Minister to give an assurance to the House that no irrevocable step would be taken before a formal statement was made to Parliament. It looked as if Winston was attempting to fish in troubled waters. The next day Winston issued an impressive statement to the press. It read:

I plead for time and patience. The nation must realise the character of the constitutional issue. There is no question of any conflict between the King and Parliament. Parliament has not been consulted in any way, nor allowed to express any opinion.

The question is whether the King is to abdicate upon the advice of the Ministry of the day. No such advice has ever before been tendered to a Sovereign in Parliamentary times.

This is not a case where differences have arisen between the Sovereign and his Ministers on any particular measure. These could certainly be resolved by normal processes of Parliament or dissolution.

In this case we are in presence of a wish expressed by the Sovereign to perform an act which in no circumstances can be accomplished for nearly five months, and may conceivably, for various reasons, never be accomplished at all.

That, on such a hypothetical and suppositional basis the supreme sacrifice of abdication and potential exile of the Sovereign could be demanded, finds no support whatever in the British Constitution. The Ministry has the authority to advise the abdication of the Sovereign. Only the most serious Parliamentary processes would even raise the issue in the decisive form. The Cabinet has no right to prejudge such a question without having previously ascertained at the very least the will of Parliament. This could, perhaps, be obtained by messages from the Sovereign to Parliament, and by addresses of both Houses after due consideration of these messages. For the Sovereign to abdicate incontinently in the present circumstances would inflict an injury upon the constitutional position of the monarchy which is measureless and cannot fail to be grievous to the institution itself, irrespective of the existing occupant of the Throne.

Parliament would also fail entirely in its duty if it allowed such an

event to occur as the signing of an abdication in response to the advice of Ministers without taking all precautions to make sure that these same processes may not be repeated with equal uncanny facility at no distant date in unforeseen circumstances. Clearly time is needed for searching constitutional debate.

The next question—what has the King done? If it be true, as is alleged, that the King has proposed to his Ministers legislation which they are not prepared to introduce, the answer of Ministers should be not to call for abdication, but to refuse to act upon the King's request, which thereupon became inoperative.

If the King refuses to take the advice of his Ministers they are, of course, free to resign. They have no right whatever to put pressure upon him to accept their advice by soliciting beforehand assurances from the leader of the Opposition that he will not form an alternative Administration in the event of their resignation, and confronting the King with an ultimatum. Again, there is cause for time and patience.

Why cannot time be granted? The fact that it is beyond the King's power to accomplish the purpose which Ministers oppose until the end of April [the decree absolute in Mrs. Simpson's divorce suit would not be pronounced until that month] surely strips the matter of constitutional urgency.

There may be some inconvenience but that inconvenience stands on a different plane altogether from the grave constitutional issues I have set forth.

National and Imperial considerations alike require that before such a dread step as a demand for abdication is taken, not only should the constitutional position be newly defined by Parliament, but that every method should be exhausted which gives the hope of a happier solution.

Lastly, but surely not least, there is the human and personal aspect.

The King has been for many weeks under the greatest strain, moral, and mental, that can fall upon a man. Not only has he been inevitably subjected to the supreme stress of his public duty, but also to the agony of his own feelings.

Surely, if he asks for time to consider the advice of his Ministers, now that at length matters have been brought to this dire culmination, he should not be denied.

Howsoever this matter may turn, it is pregnant with calamity and inseparable from inconvenience. But all the evil aspects will be aggravated beyond measure if the utmost chivalry and compassion is not shown, both by Ministers and by the British nation, towards a gifted and beloved King torn between private and public obligations of love and duty.

The Churches stand for charity. They believe in the efficacy of

prayer. Surely their influence must not oppose a period of reflection. I plead, I pray, that time and tolerance will not be denied. The King had no means of personal access to his Parliament or his people. Between him and them stand in their office the Ministers of the Crown. If they thought it their duty to engage all their power and influence against him, still he must remain silent. All the more must they be careful not to be the judge in their own case, and to show a loyal and Christian patience even at some political embarrassment to themselves.

If an abdication were to be hastily extorted the outrage so committed would cast its shadow forward across many chapters of the history of the British Empire.

There was much in this sensible and humane statement which appealed to public opinion and Winston waited to see the effect.

From the purely constitutional point of view there was much logic in his argument. There was no precedent, nothing to guide anybody in the constitutional-law books, for no English king had ever contemplated marrying a twice-divorced American woman before. They had had their mistresses and their illegitimate children, but there had been nothing illegal or constitutionally wrong in this. Indeed, if King Edward had decided to make Mrs. Simpson his mistress without marrying her, it is unlikely that either the Prime Minister or the Archbishop of Canterbury could or would have dared to mention the matter publicly, and there would have been a tacit general agreement to keep the scandal hushed up.

Winston's demand for time for consideration appealed to the people's sense of fair play, and his request for Christian charity and time for prayer were obviously directed at the Archbishop of Canterbury, who seemed to be doing his utmost to rush the King off the throne.

One wonders what attitude Churchill would have taken had he been Prime Minister, as he became later. From his statement it is clear that he was inclined to be sympathetic with the King. He seemed to think that the abdication of Edward and his being supplanted by George would shake the foundations of the Constitution, of the Empire, indeed of civilization itself. Winston had always been good at conjuring up nightmares to suit the occasion, and his reference to the proposed abdication as "an outrage which would cast its shadow forward across many chapters of the

history of the British Empire" was one of them. His prediction that the abdication "would inflict an injury upon the constitutional position of the monarchy which is measureless and cannot fail to be grievous to the institution itself" was an attempt to make the nation's flesh creep, even if Baldwin's and the Archbishop's did not. What the abdication incident did show was that a king could be sacked just as easily as a plumber. And, unlike the plumber, the King had no union to protect him.

If Winston's plea for time and prayer had been acceded to, it is quite likely that a press campaign might have been whipped up in the King's favor, for Baldwin and Archbishop Lang were not by any stretch of the imagination overpopular. Perhaps they realized that the sooner the abdication was over and done with the better.

On Thursday, December 7, the Prime Minister gave a cautiously worded statement stating that the King was engaged in making up his mind on his course of action and deprecating any further supplementary questions. Winston, however, rose to repeat his request that no irrevocable step should be taken before a formal statement was made to Parliament. From all sides of the House came loud cries of "No" and "Sit down." The mood of the House was so obvious that Churchill, not easily suppressed, was so taken aback that he could do nothing but subside.

The victory went to Baldwin and the Archbishop. The world heard over the radio that the King had abdicated and heard his dramatic, pathetic farewell. The Speaker announced it at the House on December 10 without Parliament having had any voice in the matter. There was a brief debate after his statement. Churchill made a brief speech in which he said:

Nothing is more certain or more obvious than that recrimination or controversy at this time would not only be useless, but harmful and wrong. What is done, is done. What has been done, or left undone, belongs to history, and to history, so far as I am concerned, it shall be left. I will therefore make two observations only.

The first is this: It is clear from what we have been told this afternoon that there was at no time any constitutional issue between the King and his Ministers, or between the King and Parliament. The supremacy of Parliament over the Crown, the duty of the Sovereign

to act in accordance with the advice of his Ministers; neither of those was ever at any moment in question. I venture to say that no Sovereign has ever conformed more strictly to the Constitution than his present Majesty. In fact he has voluntarily made a sacrifice for the peace and strength of his realm, which go far beyond the bounds required by the law and constitution. This is my first observation.

My second is this: I have, throughout, pleaded for time; anyone can see how grave would have been the evils of protracted controversy.

On the other hand it was, in my view, our duty to endure these evils, even at serious inconvenience, if there was any hope that time would bring a solution.

Whether there was any hope or not is a mystery which, at the present time, it is impossible to resolve. Time was also important from another point of view. It was essential that there should be no room for aspersions, after the event, that the King had been hurried to his decision. I believe that, if this decision had been taken last week, it could not have been declared that it was an unhurried decision, so far as the King himself was concerned, but now I accept wholeheartedly what the Prime Minister has proved, namely, that the decision taken this week has been taken by His Majesty freely, voluntarily and spontaneously, in his time and in his own way. As I have been looking at this matter, as is well known, from an angle different from that of most members, I thought it my duty to place this fact also upon record.

That is all I have to say upon the disputable part of this matter, but I hope the House will bear with me for a minute or two, because it was my duty as Home Secretary, more than a quarter of a century ago, to stand beside His Majesty and proclaim his style and titles at his investiture as Prince of Wales amid the sunlit battlements of Caernarvon Castle, and ever since then he has honoured me here, and also in wartime, with his personal kindness and, I may even say, friendship. I should have been ashamed if, in my independent and unofficial position, I had not cast about for every lawful means, even the most forlorn, to keep him on the Throne of his fathers, to which he only recently succeeded amid hope and prayers of all.

In this Prince there were discerned qualities of courage, of simplicity, of sympathy and, above all, of sincerity, qualities rare and precious which might have made his reign glorious in the annals of this ancient Monarchy. It is the acme of tragedy that these very virtues should, in the private sphere, have led only to this melancholy and bitter conclusion. But, although to-day our hopes are withered, still I will assert that his personality will not go down uncherished to future ages, that it will be particularly remembered in the homes of his poorer subjects, and that they will ever wish from the bottoms of their hearts

for his private peace and happiness, and for the happiness of those who are dear to him.

I must say one word more, and I say it especially to those here and out of doors—and do not underrate their numbers—who are most poignantly afflicted by what has occurred. Danger gathers upon our path. We cannot afford—we have no right—to look back. We must look forward; we must obey the exhortation of the Prime Minister to look forward. The stronger the advocate of monarchial principle a man may be, the more zealously must he now endeavour to fortify the Throne, and to give His Majesty's successor that strength which can only come from the love of a united nation and Empire.

It was a skilful parliamentary get-out, a brave attempt to cover a quick retreat. Winston knew as well as anybody else that the statement that the decision taken by the King was "taken freely, voluntarily and spontaneously" was actually so much eyewash.

So Edward went; Winston's tragic forebodings were not realized: the British Constitution was not undermined, the monarchy went on from strength to strength, the earth continued on its axis, and by December 25, 1936, the nation had recovered sufficiently to enjoy its Christmas pudding.

Winston, however sound in his ethics and logic, had taken the wrong political line. His public stock, which had been rising, slumped heavily. Baldwin and the Archbishop, playing upon Victorian tradition, had been too much for him.

CHAPTER XVIII

Tribute to Hitler

Out of office, Churchill had greater leisure for writing, and he contributed regularly to the press. Many of these articles are interesting, especially in so far as they show the mind of the man. Take, for example, his studies of personalities of his generation, later published in book form under the title of *Great Contemporaries*. They are written in typical sonorous Churchillian prose, with innumerable adjectives, chosen not so much for their meaning as for their sound. The most interesting of these essays in the light of later events is his chapter on Hitler.

Winston's extravagant eulogy of Mussolini has already been discussed. What, then, were his impressions of Hitler in 1935? What had endeared Mussolini to Churchill was his successful campaign against Communism in Italy. Had he been an Italian, he assured Mussolini, he would have been with him from the start.

Churchill did not, like Lloyd George, go to Germany to meet Hitler. The Fuhrer was a German and not an Italian, and Churchill had seen enough of the Germans in the First World War to know what formidable enemies they could be. He had no doubts about giving his unqualified approval to the Fascist idea in Italy, but when it spread to Germany and took the form of a belligerent

resurgence of German nationalism, whose objective was to end the Treaty of Versailles and to reverse the military defeats of the First World War, that was a different matter. Had Hitler been concerned only with preaching a holy war against Russia, Churchill could not logically have quarrelled with him. For he was as bitterly anti-Bolshevik as Hitler or Goebbels or any of the school of anti-Russian hate merchants and propagandists who exploited the Red bogey in their political warfare. Winston had been a pioneer and a distinguished master of this propaganda from the beginning, long before the Russians or the rest of Europe had heard of Goebbels. Indeed, in his memorandum to Lloyd George, written in March, 1920, he had developed a theory of building up Germany as a bulwark against Bolshevism.

In 1920 he wrote to Lloyd George, "You ought to tell France that we will make a defensive alliance with her against Germany if, only if, she entirely alters her treatment of Germany and loyally accepts a British policy of help and friendship towards Germany." He did not believe that "any real harmony is possible between Bolshevism and present civilization." "But Germany," he wrote, "may perhaps still be saved." What he meant was, of course, from Socialism and Communism.

But Hider was not merely an anti-Communist, he was anti-French and opposed to the victors of Versailles, too, although not anti-British prior to 1941. So, in 1935, Churchill had not quite made up his mind about Hitler. In the first paragraph of his essay "Hitler and His Choice," he wrote: "Although no subsequent political action can condone wrong deeds, history is replete with examples of men who have risen to power by employing stern, grim and even frightful methods but who, nevertheless, when their life is revealed as a whole, have been regarded as great figures whose lives have enriched the story of mankind. So may it be with Hitler."

He was not sure where Hitler was going to lead Germany, but could not refrain from admiration of this "corporal, a former house-painter," who had "set out to regain all."

In fifteen years that have followed this resolve, he has succeeded in restoring Germany to the most powerful position in Europe, and not

only has he restored the position of his country, but he has even, to a very great extent, reversed the results of the Great War . . . the vanquished are in process of becoming the victors and the victors the vanquished . . . whatever else may be thought about these exploits they are certainly among the most remarkable in the whole history of the world.

Churchill had always been a worshipper of success, whether in politics or war, and Hitler's success had certainly been spectacular. Now what were the reasons for this? Churchill went on: "Hitler's success, and indeed his survival as a political force, would not have been possible but for the lethargy and folly of the French and British governments since the War, and especially in the last three years."

These were years when Churchill had not been in the Cabinet. But he had been the Chancellor of the Exchequer for five years in the critical period after the war, and there is no evidence that during this time he had been very active himself in trying to change the trend of British policy towards Germany and to remedy the grievances which Hitler had exploited. He had been too busy carrying on his rhetorical campaigns against Russia. Then he adds:

For a long time the French pursued the absurd delusion that they could extract vast indemnities from the Germans in order to compensate them for the devastation of the war. Figures of reparation payments were adopted, not only by the French but by the British [incidentally Churchill was a prominent member of the Government that adopted them] which had no relation whatever to any process which exists, or could be devised of transferring wealth from one community to another.

All this had been clearly explained over thirty years before by Norman Angell in his *Great Illusion*, and at the time of the signing of the Versailles Treaty by J. M. Keynes in his *Economic Consequences of the Peace*. Churchill was rather late in discovering all this, and certainly for many of these years he shared the governmental responsibility for British foreign policy.

Actually, according to Churchill, during all the years that had followed the ending of the First World War British foreign policy had been wrong, but except for brief intervals in 1924 and in 1929-31 the Tories had been in power. In the years when a La-

hour Government had been in office attempts had been made to pursue a more enlightened policy aiming at reversing the errors of Versailles. But there had been no help from Winston; on the contrary, he had been chiefly concerned with trying to get these Labour Governments out of power.

Churchill went on to outline the blunders in British and French policy which had helped Hitler to build up his Nazi movement, and continues:

In fact nothing was gained at the cost of all this friction for although the Allies extracted about one thousand million pounds worth of assets from the Germans, the United States and, to a lesser extent, Britain, lent Germany at the same time over two thousand million. [He might have added that Germany re-lent some of this money to Russia when he had feverishly campaigned against a Russian loan.] Yet while the Allies poured their wealth into Germany to build her up and revive her wealth and industry, the only results were an increasing resentment and the loss of their money.

Even while Germany was receiving great benefits by the loans which were made her, Hitler's movement gained each week life and force from irritation at Allied interference.

All that Churchill said in 1935, *after* Hitler had become Germany's dictator, had been said before by internationally-minded British statesmen during the fifteen years in which the policy, now denounced by him, was in operation.

Where, one might ask, had Churchill been during these years? Had he ever raised his voice against reparations when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer in Baldwin's Government? What protests had he made against "the lethargy and folly of the French and British governments since the war?" Had he not been one of the leading members of these governments? E. D. Morel had warned the country what would be the inevitable result of the policy embodied in the Treaty of Versailles when he had opposed Churchill at Dundee. But then Churchill stood as the principal protagonist of this policy.

"Little was done to redress the grievances of the treaties of Versailles and Trianon," wrote Churchill in 1935, explaining why Hitler had been able to capture power in Germany. J. M. Keynes, sixteen years earlier, had written his historic warning in his book

The Economic Consequences of the Peace. If Churchill had read that book he certainly had not come out to support its author. One of the political consequences of the peace had been Hitler, and Churchill admits that Hitler's success and his survival as a political force "was due to the lethargy and folly of British governments." It was a Tory Foreign Minister, Sir Austen Chamberlain, who had refused the concessions to Stresemann at Geneva, the concessions with which Stresemann said he could have "won this generation for peace." This was Tory policy, and during this time Churchill had been Chancellor of the Exchequer! The charges of folly and lethargy which he now levelled at the British postwar Governments surely applied to him.

Did Churchill campaign during these years for a policy towards Germany which would have prevented Hitler? Or was he too obsessed by his hatred of Russia and with his nightmares about India to realize the importance of what was happening in Germany? Churchill writes as if the trouble started only with the MacDonald Government of 1929. In 1933, Churchill had in the House of Commons vigorously attacked Mussolini's proposal for a four-power pact, the one comprehensive plan set forth in Europe which might have revised postwar treaties in a peaceful manner and held Hitler in check. Churchill went on to express admiration of Hitler's struggle for power:

While all these formidable transformations were occurring in Europe, Corporal Hitler was fighting his long, wearing battle for the German heart.

The story of that struggle cannot be read without admiration for the courage, the perseverance and the vital force which enabled him to challenge, defy, conciliate, or overcome all the authorities or resistances which barred his path. He, and the ever increasing legions who worked with him, certainly showed at this time, in their patriotic ardour and love of country, that there was nothing they would not do or dare, no sacrifice of life, limb and liberty that they would not make themselves or inflict upon their opponents. The main episodes of the story are well known. The riotous meetings, the fusillade at Munich, Hitler's imprisonment, his various arrests and trials, his conflict with Hindenburg, his electoral campaign, Von Papen's tergiversation, Hitler's conquest of Hindenburg, Hindenburg's desertion of Brüning—all these were the milestones upon that indomitable march which

carried the Austrian-born corporal to the life dictatorship of the entire German nation of nearly seventy million souls, constituting the most industrious, tractable, fierce and martial race in the world.

For the success of Hitler, Churchill insists, the Allies, Britain and France, were responsible, "and the achievement by which the tables have been turned upon the complacent, feckless and purblind victors deserves to be reckoned a prodigy in the history of the world and a prodigy which is inseparable from the personal exertions of life thrust of a single man." Churchill went on to ask:

What manner of man is this grim figure who has performed these superb toils and loosed these frightful evils? Does he still share the passions he has evoked? Does he, in the full sunlight of worldly triumph, at the head of the great nation he has raised from the dust, still feel racked by the hatreds and antagonisms of his desperate struggle; or will they be discarded like the armour and the cruel weapons of strife under the mellowing influence of success? Evidently, a burning question for men of all nations. Those who have met Hitler face to face in public, business, or on social terms, have found a highly competent, cool, well-informed functionary with an agreeable manner, a discerning smile, and few have been unaffected by a subtle personal magnetism.

Nor is this impression merely the dazzle of power. He exerted it on his companions at every stage in his struggle, even when his fortunes were in the lowest depths. Thus the world lives on hopes that the worst is over, and that we may yet live to see Hitler a gentler figure in a happier age.

Certainly Hitler could not complain that the article was uncomplimentary. True, Churchill regarded him as a possible menace to the peace of Europe, but he hoped that the Fiihrer would become a responsible and a respectable European statesman like his old friend Mussolini. He was not quite sure whether Hitler was going to be the bearer of an olive branch or the wielder of a rubber truncheon or an iron club. But he certainly could not conceal his admiration for Hitler and his career. Two years later he wrote: "One may dislike Hitler's system and yet admire his patriotic achievement. If our country were defeated I hope we should find a champion as admirable to restore our courage and lead us back to our place among the nations."

It is well to remember that all this fulsome eulogy of Hitler

was written after Hitler had revealed all the traits and policies which could justify any rational opposition to his regime: the establishment of concentration camps for liberals, democrats, Communists and Jews; his anti-Semitic measures; the brutal purge of June-July, 1934; repudiation of the Treaty of Versailles and revival of German armament; the occupation of the Rhineland, and the like. If any leader of a democracy had reason at any time to rise up against Hitler, the justification existed in 1937, if it existed at all—indeed, even as early as 1935.

In his *Second World War*, Churchill wrote quite differently of Hitler. He had forgotten the tributes of 1935 and 1937. He did not refer to Hitler in 1935 and 1937 as the corporal who had made himself "useful to the German officer-class by arousing soldiers and workers to fierce hatred of Jews and Communists." On the contrary, Churchill had then expressed his admiration of Hitler's early career.

There is little reason to think that Churchill was ever greatly disturbed by Hitler's ideology or his anti-democratic policies. His antagonism seems to have been born of fear that Germany might become too powerful under the Nazis and challenge British dominance in Western Europe and of the recognition that rousing Britain against Hitler might be the only way in which he could once again gain an important public post.

Evidence of the first factor appears in a statement which Churchill made to the eminent American businessman General Robert E. Wood. Wood had lunch with Churchill in the latter's apartment in London in November, 1936, and at that time Churchill remarked to Wood: "Germany is getting too strong and we must smash her." But Churchill was surely sufficiently well acquainted with Hitler's notorious Anglomania and his almost servile admiration of British imperialism to realize that Hitler was not likely to challenge England unless directly provoked. He wished collaboration with England rather than antagonism.

It is likely that political ambition was the most important factor which led Churchill to become a Hitler-baiter and to attempt to rouse Britain against the Nazis. The American publicist Francis Neilson, in his *The Makers of War*, states this point very concisely:

"It is easy for us to see that Hitler at the head of the German people was Churchill's political adversary. History provided the scheme in which both enacted their roles. Without Hitler and the background of the events that spurred him to act, Churchill might never have held office again."

When Churchill finally turned on Hitler, he went all out in fierce antagonism. His politically simulated fury knew no bounds. In his *Grand Alliance* he wrote: "I have only one purpose, the destruction of Hitler, and my life is much simplified thereby." And no holds were to be barred in this effort. On September 21, 1943, Churchill told the House of Commons that "To achieve the extirpation of Nazi tyranny there are no lengths of violence to which we will not go." The bombing of Dresden in February, 1945, bore this out, even though it was not in the least needed to unseat Hitler, whose situation had become hopeless before this time.

CHAPTER XIX

Trotsky and Shaw

In marked contrast to his personal admiration of Mussolini and Hitler were Churchill's savage attacks on contemporaries who were on the side of the Russian Revolution.

Trotsky especially was depicted as a Red ogre. Churchill wrote of Trotsky: "He did not like the Tsar, so he murdered him and his family." The historical facts are that the Tsar and his family were shot without Trotsky knowing anything about it. "He did not like the imperial government, so he blew it up." The imperial government was overthrown before Trotsky returned to Russia from Canada. One can understand why Churchill disliked Trotsky and the Russian Revolution, but he might at least have made sure of the simple facts. Trotsky was a personality against whom Winston could rave with impunity:

He still fumed, growled, snarled, bit and plotted. He had raised the poor against the rich. He had raised the penniless against the poor. He had raised the criminal against the penniless. All had fallen out as he had willed. But nevertheless the vices of human society required, it seemed, new scourgings. In the deepest depths he sought with desperate energy for a deeper. But poor wretch—he had reached rock bottom. Nothing lower than the Communist criminal class could be found. In vain he had turned his gaze upon the wild beasts. The apes

could not appreciate his eloquence. He could not mobilise the wolves, whose numbers had so notably increased during his administration.

Trotsky had "the ferocity of Jack the Ripper, the toughness of Titus Oates! . . . Like the cancer bacillus, he grew, he fed, he tortured, he slew in fulfilment of his nature." Churchill had obviously got Trotsky on the brain. And he still regarded the Russian Revolution as if it were a continuation of Sidney Street. "For all its horrors, a glittering light plays over the scenes and actors of the French Revolution. The careers and personalities of Robespierre, of Danton, of Marat, gleam luridly across a century. But the dull, squalid figures of the Russian Bolsheviks are not redeemed in interest even by the magnitude of their crimes." Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin. Whatever history might say of them it will hardly dismiss them as "dull"!

Churchill's outburst against Trotsky was clearly caused by the contemptuous references that the latter had made to him in a review of his book *The Aftermath* in *John o' London's Weekly* (April 20, 1929). In his book Churchill had written the following passage about Lenin. It was typical Churchillian journalese:

Implacable vengeance, rising from a frozen pity in a tranquil, sensible, matter-of-fact, good-humoured integument! His weapon logic; his mood opportunist. His sympathies cold and wide as the Arctic Ocean: his hatreds tight as the hangman's noose. His purpose to save the world: his methods to blow it up. Absolute principles, but ready to change them. Apt at once to kill or learn: dooms and afterthoughts: ruffianism and philanthropy: But a good husband; a gentle guest; happy, his biographers assure us, to wash up the dishes or dandle the baby; as mildly amused to stalk a capercaillie as to butcher an Emperor.

The quality of Lenin's revenge was impersonal. Confronted with the need of killing any particular person he showed reluctance—even distress. But to blot out a million, to proscribe entire classes, to light the flames of intestine war in every land with the inevitable destruction of the well-being of whole nations—these were sublime abstractions.

Trotsky's review was published under the headline: "**MR. CHURCHILL IS WRONG.** The Real and Mythical Lenin: Was He Reckless in Taking Lives? Why the Russian Army Collapsed." Trotsky wrote:

In 1918-19 Mr. Churchill attempted to overthrow Lenin by force of arms. In 1929 he attempts a psychological and political portraiture of him in his book *The Aftermath* (Thornton Butterworth, 30/-). Perhaps he was hoping thereby to secure some sort of literary revenge for his unsuccessful appeal to the sword. But his methods are no less inadequate in the second mode of attack than they were in the first.

"His [Lenin's] sympathies cold and wide as the Arctic Ocean. His hatreds tight as the hangman's noose," writes Mr. Churchill. Verily, he juggles with antitheses as an athlete with dumb-bells. But the observant eye soon notices that the dumb-bells are painted cardboard, and the bulging biceps are eked out with padding.

The true Lenin was instinct with moral force—a force whose main characteristic was its absolute simplicity. To try to assess him in terms of stage athletics was bound to spell failure.

Mr. Churchill's facts are miserably inaccurate. Consider his dates, for instance. He repeats a sentence, which he had read somewhere or other, referring to the morbid influence exercised on Lenin's evolution by the execution of his elder brother. He refers the fact to the year 1894. But actually the attempt against Alexander IPs life was organised by Alexander Ulianof (Lenin's brother) on March 1st, 1887.

Mr. Churchill avers that in 1894 Lenin was sixteen years of age. In point of fact he was then twenty-four and in charge of the secret organisation at Petersburg. At the time of the October Revolution he was not thirty-nine, as Mr. Churchill would have it, but forty-seven years old. Mr. Churchill's errors in chronology show how confusedly he visualises the period and people of which he writes.

But when from the point of view of chronology and fisticuffs we turn to that of the philosophy of history, what we see is even more lamentable.

Mr. Churchill tells us that discipline in the Russian army was destroyed after the February Revolution, by the order abolishing the salute to officers. This was the point of view of discontented old generals and ambitious young subalterns: otherwise it is merely absurd. The old army stood for the supremacy of the old classes, and was destroyed by the revolution. When peasants had taken away the landowners' property the peasants' sons could hardly continue to serve under officers who were sons of landowners. The army is no mere technical organisation, associated only with marching and promotion, but a moral organisation founded on a definite scheme of mutual relations between individuals and classes. When a scheme of this kind is upset by a revolution, the army unavoidably collapses.

It was always thus. . . .

I suspect that Mr. Churchill did not even deign to take the trouble carefully to read the article on Lenin which I wrote for the *Encyclo-*

pædia Britannica in 1926. If he had, he would not have committed these crude, glaring errors of dates which throw everything out of perspective.

One thing Lenin could not tolerate was muddled thought. He had lived in all European countries, mastered many languages, had read and studied and listened and observed and compared and generalised. When he became the head of a revolutionary country, he did not fail to avail himself of this opportunity to learn, conscientiously and carefully. He did not cease to follow the life of all other countries. He could read and speak fluently English, German and French. He could read Italian and a number of Slavonic languages. During the last years of his life, though overburdened with work, he devoted every spare minute to studying the grammar of the Czech language in order to have access, without intermediaries, to the inner life of Czechoslovakia.

What can Mr. Churchill and Lord Birkenhead know of the workings of this forceful, piercing, tireless mind of his, with its capacity to translate everything that was superficial and fundamental?

Trotsky then dealt with some statements that had been made in an article by Lord Birkenhead, but later returned to Mr. Churchill, who had written indignantly about the cruelty of the Bolsheviks in the Civil War:

Mr. Churchill brings up against Lenin—and it is the very keystone of his article—statistics of the casualties of the civil war. These statistics are quite fantastic. This, however, is not the main point. The victims were many on either side. Mr. Churchill expressly specifies that he includes neither the deaths from starvation nor the deaths from epidemics. In his would-be athletic language he declares that neither Tamerlane nor Jenghiz Khan were as reckless as Lenin in expenditure of human lives. Judging by the order he adopts, one would hold that Mr. Churchill considers Tamerlane more reckless than Jenghiz Khan. In this he is wrong; statistical and chronological figures are certainly not the strong point of this Finance Minister. But this is by the way.

In order to find examples of mass expenditure of human life, Mr. Churchill must needs go to the history of Asia in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The great European war of 1914—18, in which ten million men were killed and twenty million crippled, appears to have entirely escaped his memory. The campaign of Jenghiz Khan and Tamerlane were child's play in comparison with the doings of civilisation from 1914 to 1918. But it is in a tone of lofty moral indignation that Mr. Churchill speaks of the victims of civil war in Russia—forgetting Ireland, and India, and other countries.

In short, the question is not so much the victims as it is the duties

and the objects for which war was waged. Mr. Churchill wishes to make clear that all sacrifices, in all parts of the world, are permissible and right so long as the object is the power and sovereignty of the British Empire—that is, of its governing classes. But the incomparably lesser sacrifices are wrong which result from the struggle of peoples attempting to alter the conditions under which they exist—as occurred in England in the seventeenth century, in France at the end of the eighteenth, in the United States twice (eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), in Russia in the twentieth century, and as will occur more than once in the future. It is vainly that Mr. Churchill seeks assistance in the evocation of the two Asiatic warrior chiefs, who both fought in the interests of nomadic aristocracies, but yet aristocracies coveting new territories and more slaves—in which respect their dealings were in accordance with Mr. Churchill's principles, but certainly not with Lenin's. Indeed, we may recall that Anatole France, the last of the great humanists, often expressed the idea that of all kinds of the bloodthirsty insanity called war, the least insane was civil war, because at least the people who waged it did so of their own accord and not by order.

Trotsky went on to argue that the prolongation of the Civil War had been due to the Allied intervention:

Mr. Churchill has committed yet another mistake, a very important one, and, indeed, from his own point of view, a fatal one. He forgot that in civil wars, as in all wars, there are two sides: and that in this particular case, if he had not come in on the side of a very small minority, the number of the victims would have been considerably less. In October, we conquered power almost without a fight. Kerensky's attempt to reconquer it evaporated as a dewdrop falling on a red-hot stone. So mighty was the driving power of the masses, that the older classes hardly dared to resist.

When did the civil war, with its companion the Red Terror, really start? Mr. Churchill, being weak in the matter of chronology, let us help him. The turning point was the middle of 1918. Led by the Entente diplomatists and officers, the Czechoslovakians got hold of the railway line leading to the East. The French Ambassador, Noulens, organised deeds of terror and an attempt to cut off the water supply to Petersburg. Mr. Churchill encourages and finances Savinkov; he is behind Judenich. He determines the exact dates on which Petersburg and Moscow are to fall. He supports Denikin and Wrangel. The monitors of the British Fleet bombard our coast. Mr. Churchill proclaims the coming of "fourteen nations." He is the inspirer, the organiser, the financial backer, the prophet of the civil war: a generous backer, a mediocre organiser, and a very bad prophet.

He had been better advised not to recall the memories of those times. The number of the victims would have been not ten times, but a hundred or a thousand times smaller but for British guineas, British monitors, British tanks, British officers, and British food supplies.

Mr. Churchill understands neither Lenin nor the duties that lay before him. His lack of comprehension is at its worst when he attempts to deal with the inception of the new economic policy. For him, Lenin thereby gave himself the lie. Lord Birkenhead adds that in ten years the very principles of the October Revolution were bankrupt. Yes: he who in ten years failed to do away with the miners' unemployment or to palliate it, expects that in ten years we Russians can build up a new community without committing one mistake, without one flaw, without one setback; a wonderful expectation which gives us the measure of the primitive and purely theoretical quality of the honourable Conservative's outlook. We cannot foretell how many errors, how many setbacks, will mark the course of history; but to see, amid the obstacles and deviations and setbacks of all kinds, the straight line of historical evolution was the achievement of Lenin's genius.

Churchill's reputation as a historian of the events of his day and his estimate of the outstanding international personalities of the time had never been so completely and scathingly debunked before, and this made him abusive and angry. While the British public was regarding him as a brilliant historian, Trotsky was deflating his rhetoric, penetrating his superficialities, exploding his facts, and generally treating him contemptuously as an ignoramus. The best that Winston could do in reply was his shrill, abusive article on "Trotsky, Alias Bronstein," and yell "Jack the Ripper."

Later on, Churchill was to pay his tribute to Stalin, hail him as a mighty warrior and drink his health in the Kremlin. Churchill could always turn on the orations to suit the occasion. But even the most fervent admirers of his literary style will hardly claim his essay on Trotsky and the Bolsheviks as one of his best efforts.

Boris Savinkov, the agent of Koltchak, was Churchill's ideal Russian. He also figures among the *Great Contemporaries*. According to Churchill, "he displayed the wisdom of a statesman, the qualities of a commander, the courage of a hero and the endurance of a martyr. . . . Savinkov seemed to be the appointed agent of Russian salvation." That was how Winston Churchill saw the Russian Revolution. Savinkov has disappeared into the mists

of history. Nobody remembers him as a great Russian except Mr. Churchill.

It is difficult to understand how Trotsky, if he had "the ferocity of Jack the Ripper" could have been "a dull, squalid figure." Trotsky was anything but that. Consistency was never Churchill's strong point. But one might have expected him to remember what he had written on a previous page. He contradicted himself. His nightmare had again overcome him. These fantasies of Sidney Street mixed up with the French Revolution must be recognized as hysteria, not history.

Churchill could not even write an essay on Bernard Shaw without going off at a tangent and raving about Russia. Shaw had obligingly tried to educate Winston on the economics of Socialism and had hopefully sent him *The Intelligent Women's Guide to Socialism*. Shaw overrated his powers of persuasion. Winston desired no guide, and he was not an intelligent woman. He had worked himself up to the pitch that he believed that Socialism meant a firing squad and was determined that nothing would shift him from it. Shaw's visit to Moscow again precipitated the delirium. Winston wrote: "The massed bands blared. Loud cheers from sturdy proletarians rent the welkin. . . . Commissar Lunacharsky delivered a flowery harangue. Commissar Litvinov, unmindful of the food queues in the back streets, prepared a sumptuous banquet" (surely Shaw did not enjoy it) "and Arch Commissar Stalin 'the man of steel' flung open the closely guarded sanctuaries of the Kremlin and, pushing aside his morning's budget of death warrants and *lettres de cachet*, received his guests with smiles of overflowing comradeship."

Winston himself was to arrive at the Kremlin later, an experience we shall presently describe. But in 1935 Stalin was numbered among his ogres, and the fact that Shaw had visited him in Russia sent Winston into two pages of sustained execration. Shaw had visited a land "where God is blasphemed, where man, plunged in this world's misery, is denied the hope of mercy on both sides of the grave, where there is a power ceaselessly engaged in trying to overturn existing civilisations by stealth, by propaganda, by

bloody force." Curious how Winston should have been so worried about "bloody force"; did he not believe in it too?

No—Shaw definitely was not among Winston's heroes. Give him the men of blood and iron so long as they were not blood-thirsty Bolsheviks. Foch, Haig, Clemenceau, Hindenburg, Mussolini, Hitler,—he raised his hat to them; they belonged to his world.

CHAPTER XX

Churchill and Chamberlain

Mr. Churchill's disciples had no reason to complain of lack of epistles. He continued to write exhortations and expostulations in fortnightly articles to Lord Beaverbrook's *Evening Standard* which were syndicated to the provincial papers, to Europe and America. Churchill was probably one of the most widely read and best-paid columnists in the world.

These materials he published in 1939 in book form under the title *Step by Step*, stating that he had not omitted a single letter in any essential. He prided himself on the fact that his comments and forecasts had been vindicated, adding: "It is a gratification to me that His Majesty's Government have at length by leisurely progress along their own paths of thought adopted even to detail the policy and theme set forth. I cannot conceal my sorrow that they did not read these conclusions earlier."

Along with his speeches in Parliament, they are pointed to by Churchill idolaters that he was right in the years before the war, when Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain were fumbling and procrastinating in a way that ultimately and inevitably led to war. Winston Churchill, they say, was the farseeing patriot who courageously protested against Chamberlain's policy of appeasement.

In contrast to Neville Chamberlain, who yielded to Hitler, sold Czechoslovakia and yielded to Mussolini, Winston Churchill is held up to our admiration as the man who saw the red light and warned the world that the war was coming and that we should be prepared to meet it. Yet it had been Churchill who had most bitterly attacked Mussolini's plan for a four-power pact in 1933, the most statesmanlike plan submitted for peacefully revising the postwar treaties, holding Hitler in check, and preserving the peace of Europe.

When it was decided to appoint a Minister of Defence, Churchill was suggested, but although Austen Chamberlain was in favor of giving him the office Neville was not. Austen wrote in his diary: "In my view there is only one man who by his studies and special abilities and aptitudes is marked out for it, and that man is Winston Churchill. I don't suppose that S. B. will offer it to him, and I don't think Neville would wish to have him back, but they are both wrong. He is the right man for the post, and in such dangerous times that consideration ought to be decisive."

There are few people who will argue in the light of events that Neville Chamberlain was a great Prime Minister. But it must be remembered that Churchill was the man who strongly advocated that Chamberlain should succeed Baldwin. When Baldwin resigned Winston claimed the right to second the nomination, made by Lord Derby, the Tory landlord peer. Neville Chamberlain had been Chancellor of the Exchequer and had come to be regarded as the next Prime Minister. Churchill was not even in the Government. He might have had some private thoughts about his own qualifications for the Premiership, but the Tories did not want him. They regarded him as an irresponsible and not an asset to their party in the country. He was, however, allowed to second the nomination of Chamberlain and to pay a tribute to "his prudent, austere, skilful and vigorous administration of the Exchequer." He continued:

Any Chancellor of the Exchequer naturally finds as his normal business that he should resist and criticise and canvass expenditure, particularly expenditure on what are called unproductive channels. But when the late Government were at length convinced—you will pardon my "at length"—of the urgent need to rearm against the danger in

which we stood and still stand, no one was more active than Mr. Chamberlain.

Indeed, no one was so active in pressing forward the policy of rearmament and in providing the immense supplies of money which had been rendered available, largely through his own foresight and prudence.

We feel sure that the leader we are about to choose, as a distinguished Parliamentarian and House of Commons man, will not resent honest differences about methods of administration, which must inevitably from time to time arise among those who mean the same thing.

I will also say that I feel sure that his great experience of the party and all its branches, and all its organisation, will make it certain that party opinion will not be denied; that if subordinate it will still have its rightful place in the mind of the leader. We have to combat the wolf of Socialism, and we shall be able to do it far more effectively as a pack of hounds than as a flock of sheep.

This was regarded as an attempt to get on the right side of the obstinate Neville and a bid for a post in the new Cabinet. Lord Salisbury and others supported the movement to bring Winston back into the Government, but there was no response from Downing Street. Chamberlain thought that it might be necessary to appease Hitler, not Churchill.

Neville Chamberlain was trying to persuade Hitler that he was a man of peace. Indeed, some people have even referred to him as though he were a pacifist. Chamberlain was nothing of the kind. He thought he could carry a program of rearmament and be a man of peace at the same time.

There could be no misunderstanding by anyone who had read *Mein Kampf* that, if Hitler intended to carry out the policy outlined in his book, it meant war. What Hitler thought was that he could avoid war on two fronts, the war which the German general staff dreaded. He knew how much the British Tories hated Russia and he knew that Churchill's hostility to Communism amounted to a disease. Indeed, had not Churchill himself advocated building up Germany as a bulwark against Russia, and was not this exactly what the Nazis were doing? Hitler calculated that a British Government and a Tory Party which had got into power as a result of a forged Zinoviev letter, and regarded the Bolshevik bogey as its most priceless election asset, would never be in an alliance with

the Bolsheviks against him. How could Churchill ever make common cause with Stalin? How could British Tories and Russian Communists combine in a common cause? That was how Hitler and Goebbels argued, and of course, in the 1930's they had good reasons for their theory.

One looks in vain in Churchill's writings from 1936 until the eve of the war to find any persistent advocacy of a military alliance with Russia such as existed before 1914. The Russians were asking for this, and however much Churchill hated the Bolsheviks, one might have expected him to have been interested in an alliance with Russia as a check to Hitler if he really feared the Fiihrer. Had he not been an enthusiastic believer in the Russian steamroller in 1914 and 1915? Had he not been a great believer in the strategic importance of Russia when he was prepared to take the gamble of the Dardanelles? Did he not realize that the Russians had millions of trained soldiers and capable generals? He was to discover this later, but his hatred of the Communists made him turn a blind eye even to Russia as a potential ally in the event of war with Hitler. Even when he wrote about the dress rehearsal for the World War in Spain he could not disguise the fact that his ideological sympathies were more with Hitler's protege Franco than with the Left. Of the Spanish Civil War, he could write (August 10, 1936):

Two new Spains are struggling for mastery. Two antagonistic modern systems are in mortal grapple. Fascism combats Communism. The spirit and prowess of Mussolini and Hitler strive with those of Trotsky and Bela Kun.

Here is no class conflict, no ordinary division of the poor and the rich, of the have-nots against the haves. All the national and martial forces in Spain have been profoundly stirred by the rise of Mussolini to Imperial power in the Mediterranean. Italian methods are a guide. Italian achievements are a Sphinx.

Shall Spain, the greatest empire in the world when Italy was a mere bunch of disunited petty princedoms, now sink into the equalitarian squalor of a Communist State or shall it resume its place among the great Powers of the world? Here is a living appeal to the youth and manhood of a proud people. The old Spain fell with the monarchy. The parliamentary constitution has led to a chaos of blood and fire. Who will make a new Spain and in what form? This is the issue which it seems must be fought to an indubitable decision.

Even Franco could not have put his case better than that. No wonder Franco's press repeated these rhetorical questions and supplied the answers.

Churchill went on to ask, "What is to be the course of France and Britain? Whoever wins in Spain, freedom and free democracy must be the losers. A revived Fascist Spain in closest sympathy with Italy and Germany is one kind of disaster; a Communist Spain spreading its snaky tentacles through Portugal and France is another, and many will think it worse."

But Churchill was not in favor of British intervention. Franco was not a great Christian hero like Koltchak or a savior of the world like Mussolini. Britain had no surplus store of old armaments to spare even for shooting the Spanish Reds. So his advice was to keep out. His reinforcements for Franco were purely rhetorical. What a pity he had not displayed a similar caution towards the civil war in Russia. Attlee went out to Spain to show his approval of Spanish democracy; there was an Attlee but not a Churchill Battalion in the International Brigade.

A fortnight later, Churchill expressed unmitigated horror at the bloodshed in Spain. Send charitable aid under the Red Cross to both sides, and for the rest, "keep out and arm" was his advice. Later on, De Valera came to very much the same conclusion about the Second World War. This noninterventionism was quite a new note for Winston Churchill; the brutality and horror of the war in Spain for some unexplained reason appeared to sicken and revolt him. Let us give due credit to Churchill the humanitarian. He seemed to be in favor of keeping out of one war.

Some two weeks after this (September 4, 1936) Churchill's article was entitled "Enemies to the Left" and devoted to the Moscow trials: "Many people unable to be shocked at the long delayed expiation of these miscreants who have bitterly sent uncounted thousands of good men to their doom were nevertheless sickened at the elaborate farce of their trial. What is the effect of this butchery upon Russia as a military factor in the balance of Europe? Clearly Soviet Russia has moved decidedly from Communism. This is a lurch to the Right."

While wondering how a change in Russian policy would affect its position in Europe, he had not yet arrived at the conclusion that,

from a military point of view, it might be wise to be polite, if not to be friendly, towards the Soviet Union. If Stalin had made "a lurch to the Right" could they not meet on common ground? Perhaps this thought went through Winston's mind, but he certainly did not develop it. He had not yet arrived at the conclusion that anyone who was prepared to kill Germans should be welcomed as a new friend. Everywhere he saw countries getting ready for war. "Everywhere the manufacture of munitions proceeds apace and science burrows its insulted head in the filth of slaughterous inventions. Only unarmed, unthinking Britain nurses the illusion of security."

But was Britain in reality only the dove of peace among the birds of prey? The British navy was certainly strong. Writing fifteen months later, Churchill himself stated that the navy was strong and that "even during the years of disarmament at least £50,000,000 sterling was spent every year upon keeping in order the plant and organization already stabilized on the largest scale." Certainly there had never been any disarmament as far as the navy was concerned.

As for the army, as Churchill proceeded to point out, it had to be considered in relation to the French army, which he thought was strong. It had been assumed since 1918 that, in the event of a war in Europe, we would be fighting on the side of the French, and the plans for the army had been based on this assumption. The air force might have been considered weak in relation to that of the new German air force, but the Tory chief of the Air Ministry maintained that the air force was as strong as they could make it. Later the illusion became general that Britain went into the war almost unarmed. But on January 7, 1938, nearly two years before war came, Churchill boasted, "Money for defense is certainly pouring out in all directions in Britain."

How then could Churchill talk about "unarmed Britain"? Even the Ramsay MacDonald governments had repudiated unilateral disarmament. In fact, disarmament never had been the policy of any British government. Between the wars the British taxpayers spent enormous sums on the army, navy and air force. Whether they got value for their money is a different matter. And if they did not, it was Churchill's party that was largely responsible.

The First Lord of the Admiralty had introduced in 1936 estimates showing an increase of £9,880,000 over the previous year and an increase of more than 6,000 men for the year 1937. Far from favoring disarmament, Mr. A. V. Alexander, former Labour First Lord of the Admiralty, had declared in the *Daily Herald* (November 7, 1935): "Every one of the twelve battleships is armoured as well as any ship in the world"; and in the debate Lord Stanley, the First Lord, paid a tribute to Mr. Alexander's naval program. He said: "I must pay a tribute to Mr. Alexander because in this matter we are following the lead which he gave when he was First Lord of the Admiralty." This hardly fits in with the theory that under the MacDonald Labour Government we followed a program of unilateral disarmament.

In 1936, the Air Estimates were introduced by Sir Philip Sassoon, who said in his speech:

The estimates that I have the honour of introducing to the House this afternoon at a gross total of approximately £43,000,000 and a net total of £39,000,000 are by far the largest that Parliament has had to vote to the Air Ministry since the war. This is indeed a melancholy reaction from the high aspirations with which the Disarmament Conference opened at Geneva four years ago.

So far from Britain being disarmed in the air in 1936 the first line strength of the Air Force will have been doubled in the short space of two years. I do not think any fighting force has ever been set a comparable task in time of peace.

The estimate provided for 45,000 men for the air force. This was surely not disarmament in the air.

Had the army been so reduced as to be disarmed? Introducing the Army Estimates for 1936, the Secretary of State for War, Mr. Duff Cooper, made an elaborate survey of the role of the British army in any future war and estimated for an army of 158,000 men (excluding India). The Labour Party did not advocate disarmament, but an army of 152,000.

Neither proposal meant disarmament. On the contrary, Mr. Duff Cooper's estimates provided for the mechanization of eight cavalry regiments and the reorganization of the Tank Brigade. The estimates showed an increase of £6,000,000. It was the highest for thirteen years.

Nobody who read the Parliamentary debates on the service estimates for 1936 could agree with Churchill's description in September that year of "unarmed, unthinking Britain." She had plunged into the arms race like the Continental nations. That is the main defect of Churchill as an historian; his assertions are so often inconsistent with facts. In his diary in October, 1936, Neville Chamberlain had written: "If we were to follow Winston's advice and sacrifice our commerce to the manufacture of arms we should inflict a certain injury on our trade from which it would take generations to recover, we should destroy the confidence which now happily exists and we should cripple the revenue."

It is true that Churchill was at times critical of his party, but certainly they did not pursue a policy of disarmament. They opposed it at Geneva when the Germans were in favor of Litvinov's famous disarmament plan. The Tories rejected disarmament as a policy when both Germany and Russia had governments which were prepared to agree to it. Both Germans and Russians were later to overtake Britain in the arms race, but this was after she had rejected disarmament proposals under the belief that the Allies who had won the First World War would always be the stronger armed powers.

American military experts have revealed the fact that Churchill's criticisms of alleged British and French lag in armament and his allegations about overwhelming German superiority and activity in armament were utterly without foundation. Churchill repeated them even when he had ample opportunity to know better. Even as late as his postwar book *The Gathering Storm*, Churchill wrote: "It is probable that in this last year before the outbreak, Germany manufactured at least double, and possibly treble, the munitions of Britain and France put together, and also that her great plants for tank production reached full capacity."

An official report submitted to the Secretary of the Army of the United States in October, 1947, entitled *Foreign Logistical Organizations and Methods* exposed the gross inaccuracy of Churchill's figures and charges. The Germans were far from fully mobilized for any protracted war when hostilities broke out in 1939, and British production of airplanes and tanks equalled or exceeded

that of Nazi Germany. In 1938, for example, Germany produced only 5,235 military aircraft of all types and 3,340 combat planes. In 1939, Germany produced 8,925 military planes of all types and 4,733 combat planes; England in the same year produced over 8,000 military planes. In the four months after the war started, Germany produced only 247 tanks and self-propelled guns, while the British produced 314 tanks. It is generally believed that most of German industry after 1936 was diverted to war materials. But an American scholar, Dr. Burton Klein, maintained in the *American Economic Review* (March, 1948) that Germany devoted little, if any, more of her production to war preparations than did France and England from 1936 to 1939.

In their pro-Ally and anti-revisionist volume *The Challenge to Isolation*, the American professors William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason offer the final refutation of Churchill's absurd charges of overwhelming German armament in 1939:

There can now be little doubt that the Germans in 1939 were far from being prepared for a long war on a large scale. Their current war production was inferior to that of the combined British and French and they had remarkably little in the way of reserves. Of the hundred divisions they put into the field against Poland only three were mechanized and none completely motorized. In a word, the Germans were equipped for a two-month *Blitzkrieg*, such as they waged in Poland. They were by no means equipped for the type of war in which they became involved.

CHAPTER XXI

Prophecies and Alarms

When Germany and Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact, Churchill gave a sigh of relief. In an article (November 27, 1936) he declared: "The danger of a Russo-German arrangement at the expense of the Western Democracies has definitely receded." He was hopeful that the purges in Russia meant a retreat from Communism. Churchill could now write about—

. . . the great mass of the Russian power with its national spirit, its large, vigorous, well-equipped armies, its desire to be left alone, its resolve to resist invasion or dismemberment. Now surely the time has come when Russia should choose once and for all her path to safety. Stalin with the chiefs of the Russian Army and the leaders of Russian foreign policy, should disperse and eradicate the Comintern. They should present themselves to Europe as a Soviet Socialist state strongly armed to maintain its national independence and absolutely divorced from any idea of spreading its doctrines abroad, otherwise than by example.

This was a new note of comparative politeness hitherto absent from Churchill's references to Russia. It is instructive to note that Stalin's bloody purges of 1936-38, which were surely far more extensive than those of "Jack the Ripper" Trotsky, did not enrage Churchill. Indeed, they appeared to give him no little comfort

and satisfaction. The liquidation of the old Bolsheviks had given him a faint hope that a nationalist Russia with "well-equipped armies" could be of service in the event of a war with Germany. He was prepared to forget if not to forgive. If Stalin would only dissolve the Comintern and provide armies on the eastern front, Churchill was prepared to overlook his "morning budget of death warrants." After all, was not Stalin a much more respectable figure than Trotsky? Stalin had, at least, not written contemptuous articles about Churchill. This prospect of having Russia as an ally against Hitler was certainly worth considering.

By October 15, 1937, Churchill had come to the conclusion that war was not imminent. He wrote:

Three or four years ago I was myself a loud alarmist. I tried to bring home to all the dangers that were coming upon all the world, and to arouse Parliament, and the Government who were misleading Parliament [the Tory Government], to the need of rearming. In those days the danger was distant and the time ample. Now the dangers are more clearly defined and at the same time great exertions are being made to meet them. This, therefore, is not the time to exaggerate dangers. On the contrary they must be faced with courage. In spite of the risks which wait on prophecy I declare my belief that a major war is not imminent and I still believe there is a good chance of no major war taking part in our time.

In his articles he was now patting himself on the back as one of the major political prophets. He cheered himself up for his relapses into gloom over the situation in Europe by recording his satisfaction that in Britain the tide of Socialism was ebbing:

The largest possible electorates have repeatedly yielded the largest recorded Conservative majorities. . . . The long series of by-elections and six years of power held by one set of men and forces, have all told the same tale. The Socialist Labour Party, not only in its extreme varieties, but in its most moderate forms, seems to have reached the limits of its expansion.

That was how Churchill summed up the situation in British politics in 1937. He believed that the Labour Party was going to remain in the permanent minority that it had been placed as a result of the scare-and-stunt elections, and that Socialism was "the ebbing tide." His article ended in the following vein: "The fact

that there is really no difference between the political parties and among all classes, upon British rearmament, carries with it the best pledge for the future and the surest hope that the noble ship of freedom will escape the rocks, round the point and sail into the open sea."

Hitler was telling the Germans at the same time exactly the same thing—though in less romantic language. Rearmament was the thing. If you want peace, prepare for war. Germany must be strong. Security depends on who has the most tanks, planes, and the largest armies, and is most prepared for battle. That was what Mussolini said, too. That was what they all said. So they rearmed, explaining to their peoples that this was done because the other nations were doing so. Was there—in spite of Churchill's protestations of faith in democracy—much fundamental difference between the mentality of Churchill and that of Mussolini and Hitler? True, Churchill did not wear a black shirt or a brown one, but he had paid his tribute to the "patriotism" of both the dictators. Italian and German big business backed Mussolini and Hitler because the dictators had saved it from Communism. In Britain the technique was different; the Federation of British Industries and the City of London had no need to back Sir Oswald Mosley so long as the Tories were in power. The Krupps and Thyssen backed Adolf Hitler; the British armament firms were doing well out of the rearmament program urged on the Government by Winston Churchill. For the working classes of Europe this meant less butter and more guns and war at the end of it.

By May, 1938, Churchill's new note of politeness towards Russia had become admiration of her military strength. Writing about Japan's war in China, he said:

Here we must recognise the services which Soviet Russia is rendering in the Far East to civilisation and also to British and United States interests. Russia is holding the best army of Japan gripped upon her front. At the same time, by a wonderful motor road from Russian Turkestan to the Chinese western province of Kansu, and thence on into the heart of China, a constant stream of lorries carry Russian munitions to the Chinese forces. Half a million coolies toil continuously upon this road and some at least of the weapons of modern war are placed in the hands of those who are defending

their native soil. It is certainly neither in the interests of the British Empire nor of world peace that this traffic should stop. The Western Democracies should recognise the part Soviet Russia, albeit for her own purposes, is playing in the Far East.

By September 15, 1938, Churchill went so far as to suggest that Great Britain, France and Russia, with the moral sympathy of the United States should present a simultaneous note to Herr Hitler personally, setting forth that an attack on Czechoslovakia should be met by common action, ". . . and if this were done there would be good hopes, if not indeed almost a certainty, of warding off the catastrophe which may so easily engulf our civilisation."

Chamberlain, however, was not in any mood to take this advice. The fate of Czechoslovakia was to be decided without Russia's being invited to the discussions. The Tories still kept Russia at arm's length, even when Churchill was prepared to agree to a plan for common action. Yet Churchill could not refrain from paying another tribute to Hitler:

We must learn to draw from misfortune the means of future strength. There must not be lacking in our leadership something of that spirit of the Austrian corporal who, when all had fallen into ruins about him, and when Germany seemed to have fallen forever into chaos, did not hesitate to march forth against the vast array of victorious nations and has already turned the tables so decisively upon them.

And, if called upon, Winston was ready to supply that spirit. But no call to him from the Tory government was coming yet. The Tories were quite prepared to allow him to continue his role as the growling British bulldog, but they thought that the place of the bulldog was not in the dining-room but in the kennel outside. Mr. Keith Feiling, Chamberlain's biographer, tells us that the Prime Minister noted in his diary: "Churchill's chances [of entering the Government] improve as war becomes more probable and *vice versa*."

As long as the Prime Minister was pursuing his policy of appeasement, Churchill could hardly expect to be allowed inside the Cabinet, for he had become one of its most notable critics. He regarded Neville Chamberlain's agreement with Hitler not as a prelude to "peace in our time" but as a major defeat, and said so.

On December 1, 1938, he wrote about "the grey aftermath of Munich" and speculated on the extent to which "the bloodless conquest and virtual absorption of Czechoslovakia have transformed the military position of France. All her system of alliances in Eastern Europe has collapsed and can never be reconstituted, except, perhaps, after a lapse of years and in an entirely different form."

The whole structure of the Versailles Treaty had collapsed like a pack of cards, and to all intents and purposes the 1914-18 war had been fought in vain. The policy of keeping Germany ringed round with armed force had failed. Churchill had become critical of the ruling classes of France. He wrote. "The reasons why France does not present herself in her full strength at the present time are not to be found among the working masses, who are also the soldiers of France, but in certain strata of the middle class and the well-to-do. Something of this kind can also be seen in Britain."

A fortnight later he discussed the position of Poland, which had temporarily gained at the expense of Czechoslovakia but was obviously to be Hitler's next victim:

Russia is a mystery and a riddle, which none may rede. The part Russia has played in the Far East deserves the respect of both Great Britain and the United States. What Russia can do or will in Europe in the event or in the advent of her soil being invaded, no man can tell. He would indeed be foolish to write it down as negligible.

On March 9, 1939, he noted with cordial approval that Mr. Chamberlain—

. . . had paid a visit to the Soviet Embassy in London, which betokens the new interest which Great Britain is taking in the possibilities of increased trade and co-operation with Russia. We may look, therefore, with hope to what is happening in the East of Europe, as well as to the growing strength across the Atlantic, as increasing guarantees against a breakdown of civilisation this year.

Not only was he now quite pleased to see the Prime Minister shaking "the blood-stained hand of Bolshevism," he was looking to Russia to prevent "the breakdown of civilisation."

A fortnight later Churchill's hopes had again been dashed by Hitler's invasion and annexation of Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain

definitely abandoned his appeasement policy. British guarantees were given to Poland and Rumania, and negotiations were opened with Russia. Churchill wrote:

The power and influence of Russia may well be underrated. The loyal attitude of the Soviets to the cause of peace, and their obvious interest in resisting the Nazi advance to the Black Sea, impart a feeling of encouragement to all the Eastern States now menaced by the maniacal dreams of Berlin.

On May 4 Churchill dealt with the position of Poland. He wrote:

The preservation and integrity of Poland must be regarded as a cause commanding the regard of all the world. There is every reason to believe that the Polish nation intend to fight for life and freedom. They have a fine army, of which now more than a million men are mobilised. The Poles have always fought well, and an army which comprehends its cause is doubly strong.

It is worth while at this point to emphasize the fact that Churchill, along with many other British publicists and politicians, had been one of the most outspoken critics of the creation of the Polish Corridor as one of the most unpardonable mistakes of the Treaty of Versailles and one which had to be rectified if peace were to be maintained. In the House of Commons on April 13, 1933, Churchill had said: "Many people would like to see, or would have liked to see a little while ago—I was one of them—the question of the Polish Corridor adjusted. For my part, I should certainly have considered that to be one of the greatest practical objectives of European peace-seeking diplomacy." Hitler's 1939 demand for the return of Danzig and a motor road across the Polish Corridor was actually less drastic than the "adjustment" which Churchill and other English leaders had suggested in previous years.

The Poles in the summer of 1939 were deeply suspicious of Soviet Russia, and Churchill appealed to them to agree to a Russian alliance. He wrote:

It must be vividly impressed upon the Government of Poland that the accession of Soviet Russia in good earnest to the peace bloc of nations may be decisive in preventing war, and will in any case be

necessary for ultimate success. One understands readily the Polish policy of balancing between the German and the Russian neighbour, but from the moment when the Nazi malignity is plain, a definite association between Poland and Russia becomes indispensable. . . . There is no means of maintaining an Eastern front against Nazi aggression without the active aid of Russia. Russian interests are deeply concerned in preventing Herr Hitler's designs in Eastern Europe. It should still be possible to range all the states and peoples from the Baltic to the Black Sea in one solid front against a new outrage or invasion. Such a front, if established in good heart and with resolute and efficient military arrangements, combined with the force of the Western Powers, may yet confront Hitler, Goering, Himmler, Ribbentrop, Goebbels and company with forces the German people would be reluctant to challenge.

Churchill had been rather late in coming to this conclusion. The wheel had now turned full circle. It was Churchill who had backed Poland in its attack on Russia in 1920 and had written (*Evening News*, January 28, 1920):

A poisoned Russia, an infected Russia, a plague-bearing Russia, a Russia of armed hordes smiting not only with bayonet and cannon but accompanied and preceded by the swarms of typhus-bearing vermin which slay the bodies of men, and political doctrines which destroy the health and even the soul of nations. If the Bolsheviks do not, for the moment, overwhelm with armies, they can undermine with propaganda. The peasants are roused against the landlords, the workmen against their employers, the railways and public services induced to strike, the soldiers are incited to mutiny and kill their officers, the mobs are raised against the middle classes to murder them, to plunder their houses, to steal their belongings, to debauch their wives, and carry off their children, an elaborate network of secret societies entangles honest political action, the Press is bought wherever possible. . . .

The ruin and collapse of Poland either from external violence or internal subversion, and the incorporation of Poland as a whole in the Russian Bolshevik system, would sweep away the barrier on which so much depends and would bring Russia and Germany into direct and immediate contact.

That had been Churchill's nightmare less than twenty years before; it was still the nightmare of the Polish Government to which Churchill was now making his frantic appeal to welcome the Bolshevik government as an ally in order to save Poland.