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Scholars of Winston Churchill have long had a friendly debate about whether the great statesman was a Victorian or a Modern, and there is ample evidence to fortify both sides. This delicious collection by Churchill biographer Martin Gilbert (Merton College, Oxford) of two hundred extracts from Churchill's speeches, newspaper articles, and historical and autobiographical writing offers vivid evidence that he had one foot firmly in the Victorian, imperial past; his views on Empire, for example, were more compatible with those of his father's generation than those of his contemporaries. Yet the collection also shows that Churchill's other foot rested in the modern age; on issues such as social reform or tariffs, he was progressive and ahead of his time. In many ways, this element of paradox is the man's defining quality, and the excerpts gathered here amplify it.

Consider Churchill's pendulum swings on the topic of war in modern life. As a young cavalry subaltern fighting in the (Indian) Northwest Frontier province and in the Sudan, he saw a great deal of carnage. At times, he could be naïve and foolish in his light-hearted reportage, as in this passage from *The Story of the Malakand Field Force* (1898): "I would that it were in my power to convey to the reader, who has not had the fortune to live with troops on service, some just appreciation of the compensations of war. The healthy, open-air life, the vivid incidents, the excitement, not only of realization, but of anticipation, the generous and cheery friendships, the chances of distinction which are open to all, invest life with keener interests, and rarer pleasures" (18). What a lark war could be!

Yet a year later, in *The River War* (1899), he recounted with horror and pathos what he had seen in the battle of Omdurman, when his 21st Lancers rode out against thousands of Dervishes in the Sudan. Following a battle that included British cavalry, artillery, and Maxim guns turned on the spear- and rifle-carrying Dervishes, hundreds of bodies of the enemy lay rotting in the desert sun, "swollen to almost gigantic proportions. Twice as large as living men, they appeared in every sense monstrous. The more advanced corpses hardly resembled human beings.... Frightful gashes scarred their limbs, and great black stains, once crimson, covered their garments. The sight was appalling." He wondered: "Can I ever forget?" (22-23). Two years later, covering the Boer War in South Africa for the *Morning Post*, he was moved to exclaim, after seeing dead and dying Boer and British soldiers, "Horrible war, amazing medley of the glorious and the squalid, the pitiful and the sublime, if modern men of light and leading saw your face closer, simple folk would see it hardly ever" (38).

Churchill never outgrew his ambivalence about war: he could wax romantic about it, yet knew too well its terrible cost. He reflected in 1915 with profound feeling upon the death of the young, doomed poet Rupert Brooke, who was "all that one would wish England's noblest sons to be in days when no sacrifice but the most precious is acceptable, and the most precious is that which is most freely proffered" (102). (Did he know that Brooke died not in glory in Flanders Fields but from an infected mosquito bite on a transport ship in the Aegean?) But after the war, in *The World Crisis, 1915* (1923), he wrote of the folly of "straightforward frontal attacks by valiant flesh and blood against wire and machine guns ... calling out the men of forty, of fifty, and even of fifty-five, and the youths of eighteen, sending the wounded soldiers back three or four times over into the shambles—such were now the sole manifestations of the military art" (117-18).

Yet, as we know, experience of war hardly turned Churchill into a pacifist: the allied bombing of Germany in the Second World War incinerated half a million civilians, and although Churchill regretted it, he never for one moment considered imposing limits on the use of airpower. On the day of the German invasion of the Soviet Union, he stated his policy: "We shall bomb Germany by day as well as by night in ever-

increasing measure, casting upon them month by month a heavier discharge of bombs, and making the German people taste and gulp each month a sharper dose of the miseries they have showered upon mankind" (286).

One of the pleasures of this collection is the space given over to Churchill's long career before he became prime minister in 1940. Here one finds more evidence of his surprisingly modern views. As a very junior parliamentarian, he joined forces with the Chancellor of the Exchequer David Lloyd George and championed the cause of social reform, old age pensions, and unemployment insurance. In a 1908 speech, he noted that "the social machinery at the basis of our industrial life is deficient, ill-organized and incomplete." There were many countrymen "whose condition is a disgrace to a scientific and professedly Christian civilization, and constitutes a grave and increasing peril to the State" (62). On behalf of unemployment insurance, he argued that "it is a duty to use the strength and the resources of the State to arrest the ghastly waste not merely of human happiness but of national health and strength which follows" the loss of a job. When "the frail boat in which the fortunes of the family are embarked founders" (64), the State must step in and provide help. Not only did Churchill campaign for welfare benefits, he chided the House of Lords for opposing such reforms, and mocked the Lords as "a minute minority of titled persons who represent nobody, who are answerable to nobody, and who only scurry up to London to vote in their party interests, in their class interests, and in their own interests" (67). This from a man born in Blenheim Palace.

Yet, later, during the election of 1945, Churchill made a series of notorious attacks on the Labor Party's platform. Labor's demands for nationalization of industry as well as state-provided health, education, and welfare benefits, were "an attack not only upon British enterprise, but upon the right of the ordinary man or woman to breathe freely without having a harsh, clumsy, tyrannical hand clapped across their mouths and nostrils." In a shocking statement, he even asserted that, to assure control of the country, the Labor Party would "fall back on some form of Gestapo, no doubt very humanely directed in the first instance" (360). What is so unseemly about this is that during the war Churchill had worked daily alongside Labor leaders like Clement Attlee and Ernest Bevin, whom he knew to be courageous patriots.

Although his views on the greatness of the British Empire never wavered, he could take divergent positions on the question of self-rule—depending upon the race of those claiming that privilege. He believed that white people like the Irish and the Dutch Boers ought to be considered for autonomous development within the loose framework of Empire; brown, black, and yellow peoples—uniformly "barbarous" in his writings—could never be allowed to stand on their own. Indeed, the idea of self-rule for non-whites was a laughable proposition. Like most of his countrymen, he despised the tribal and religious leaders of the colonized peoples of the Empire, the "odd and bizarre potentates" who, in their clothing and customs, appear "like a pantomime scene at Drury Lane." As a young writer, he had jeered at these ridiculous figures, including the Khalifa, the spiritual warlord the British were fighting in Sudan. They "march one by one from the dark wings of barbarism up to the bright footlights of civilization" (26). In *The River War*, he lamented that one day, "there will be no more royal freaks to conquer" (27). As for Islam, he declared "no stronger retrograde force exists in the world" (27). Who can forget his notorious opposition to Indian political independence and his sneering description of Gandhi as a "malignant, subversive fanatic" (185)?

Churchill's attitudes toward white self-government were altogether different, and, in his maiden speech in the House of Commons in February 1901, he said he wished that the Boers in South Africa, once beaten in war, would be granted autonomy within the Empire. He even claimed such British magnanimity toward the Boers would open the way to "a more gentle and a more generous age" (59), hinting at an Empire of cooperation rather than compulsion. He was a lifelong friend and admirer of the South African statesman Jan Christian Smuts. His stance on Irish Home Rule was equally progressive for its time: he introduced the Irish Free State Bill to the Commons in 1922, seeing independence for southern Ireland as a crucial step in ending war there and easing the grip of Irish affairs upon the politics of Britain.

In certain respects, this flexibility was a mark of Churchill's peculiar genius. He could adapt, change his mind, and forgive; one of his finest qualities was his lack of interest in perpetuating grudges. His eulogy for Neville Chamberlain, with whom he had fought so bitterly in the 1930s, was a handsome gesture toward a

tarnished and discredited rival. Chamberlain, Churchill gently said, had been “contradicted by events, disappointed in his hopes, and deceived and cheated by a wicked man,” but his desires were “among the noblest and benevolent instincts of the human heart—the love of peace, the toil for peace, the strife for peace... This alone will stand him in good stead as far as what is called the verdict of history is concerned” (274). As a warlord, Churchill could exude the grossest jingoism, as when he conjured up the specter of the beastly, militarist Prussian Hun during the Great War. But, in victory, he always called for magnanimity, insisting that, after World War II, Germany should not be made a pariah nation. Quoting Edmund Burke, he said in the Commons in 1946: “I cannot frame an indictment against an entire people” (377). Indeed, he went on to champion the idea of European integration.

Naturally, there are excerpts from Churchill’s most famous wartime speeches, so frequently quoted when his name is invoked. But the special appeal of this anthology is that it spans the whole of his astonishing eight decades of life, perhaps the better to place those difficult six years of war in a larger whole. Churchill possessed an attribute sadly missing in present-day politicians: he feared neither to contradict received wisdom nor to speak his mind in the face of violent opposition. He was occasionally quite wrong on many topics, but his heart moved him to “speak for England” and generations of his countrymen will forever be glad that he did.