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## The War Ministry of Winston Churchill

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prove that Tromp raised a broom to the masthead of his flagship signifying that he had victoriously swept Blake from the seas after the battle off Dungeness. While Powell does not see Blake in the broadest terms of 17th century history, he does broadly sketch a background that includes the important international events and naval problems. Most importantly, Powell has discovered something of the man amidst the events. The scarcity of sources and Blake's own personality have ensured that he will always remain a vaguely defined figure in history, but Powell has captured for us as much of Blake's character and personality as we are ever likely to recover. Unlike Nelson, Blake was not a dramatic, flamboyant character. He opposed unnecessary casualties in battle and had the kind of common sense that could lead to admonish a glory-seeking officer, "I do not love a fool-hardy captain, therefore temper your courage with discretion . . ." (p. 251). He was an educated, thinking man who could see clearly beyond the gunwales of his own ship. Powell has successfully taken us deeper than the ruffled collars and burnished armor. This portrait of one of England's most consistently successful officers deals with the beginning of the English Navy as a profession, the development of naval administration, the origins of naval tactics, and the crucial role of personality and leadership in naval affairs. Every serious student of such matters should find this scholarly and detailed biography worthwhile.

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Schoenfeld, Maxwell P. *The War Ministry of Winston Churchill*. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1972. 283p.

Mr. Schoenfeld has undertaken a most ambitious project. To write what is essentially a wartime biography of Winston Spencer Churchill requires that

one explore the personality of a most complex individual, examine the organizations—both formal and informal—of the British Ministries of War and the Foreign Office, develop the chronology of the war itself, and, most ambitious of all, discuss inter-Allied relationships and Churchill's role in the formation of Allied strategy and policy. That he has essentially succeeded is a tribute to his style and ability as well as his courage.

Churchill, of course, wore two hats in the British Government during the Second World War. He was both Prime Minister and Minister of Defense. It was impossible, in his eyes, to separate the two offices because of the simple fact that waging war was the sole policy of the British Government from 1939 to 1945. Just so, it is impossible to separate those roles in analyzing him today. This book, then, is not only a study of the British War Ministry, but of Churchill himself.

The first half of the book examines Churchill, the man, in his various aspects (The Politician, The Administrator, The Warrior), while the second half traces the events of the war years from the formation of the Grand Alliance to Potsdam and the abrupt termination of the Churchill ministry. The unfortunate result is that Churchill is somehow artificially divorced from the events that surrounded him in real life. In a brief 256 pages, therefore, we read what amounts to two books: one on Churchill, one on World War II diplomacy.

The story of World War II diplomacy has been told before, and it should not be expected that in this slim volume Mr. Schoenfeld could surpass the efforts of either W.H. McNeill or Herbert Feis; by far the greatest contribution of this book is the portrait we are given of Churchill.

The "popular" image of Churchill, particularly in the United States, is that of a sturdy and determined man with a bulldog's chin and a stirring voice who personified British resistance to Nazi

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tyranny in the darkest days of World War II, an image that as Schoenfeld notes, "sprang more from American popular political lore than from historical study."

There is a further impression which became common among Americans—particularly after the onset of the cold war in 1947—that Churchill was the one who had been right all along. He had, after all, correctly predicted the failure of appeasement in the 1930's and was one of the first to recognize and give a name to the Iron Curtain. He was thus endowed by the American public with a certain clairvoyance, an ability which Churchill himself made no efforts to disclaim. In a characteristic understatement, he had often said, "I have not always been wrong about the future course of events." Which, of course, was quite true. But neither was he always right. In the winter of 1940, for example, he claimed that Finnish resistance to the Russians had made it clear once and for all that the Red army had feet of clay and was therefore incapable of standing up to a modern armored force. But somehow, in the past few decades, the vital, human, often erring Churchill has been replaced by a haloed, superhuman, and never erring idol who is rapidly becoming the hero of a popular mythology. This new offering by Mr. Schoenfeld, therefore, does a real service in presenting a portrait of a historical figure replete with personality quirks and a fiery temper and who, though not blessed with clairvoyance, had something even more important in the darkest days of 1940-41, a fierce determination.

A major element in Churchill's political success was, of course, his remarkable oratorical skill. He was, after all, a politician who, as he himself said, had always made his living with either his pen or his tongue. His carefully prepared speeches often appeared to be spontaneous, and their effect was so powerful that he was capable of spell-

binding audiences, whether it be Parliament or a street full of citizens. Charles DeGaulle, no mean elocutionist himself, once said of him,

Whatever his audience—crowd, assembly, council, even a single interlocuter, whether he was before a microphone, on the floor of the House, at table, or behind a desk, the original, poetic, stirring flow of his ideas, arguments and feelings brought him an almost infallible ascendancy in the tragic atmosphere in which the poor world was gasping.

But this was the visible Churchill. His abilities of speech were well known then and remain so today. The more intriguing aspect, and the one less familiar to Americans, is that of government administrator. For example, we discover that Churchill was a fastidious administrator to whom everything had to be "clear and precise" and who felt that "an efficient administration meant the effective use of written memoranda." He even went so far as to insist that "private secretaries and others" in the government service refrain "from addressing each other by their first names in interdepartmental correspondence." And yet, he was "too much an individualist to ever be a tidy administrator." Though he apparently felt that the use of first names in official correspondence was in poor taste, he once chided the First Lord of the Admiralty for constantly referring to the German battleship *Tirpitz* as the *Admiral von Tirpitz*. "Surely *Tirpitz* is good enough for the beast," he said.

Schoenfeld's conclusion in regard to Churchill's administrative abilities seems justified: "... above all, he was the man who furnished the force that drove the administration through times of crisis."

Churchill was a warrior by nature. He had been a participant in three wars on three continents and, as a student of history, brought an imposing back-

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ground of experience and knowledge to his relations with the three armed forces. But it was not altogether a harmonious relationship. "He had difficulties with the War Office which dated back to the nineteenth century, and four decades of experience in the twentieth century had done little to mellow his belief that it was hidebound, devoid of imagination, extravagant of manpower, and tenaciously engaged in fighting the previous war."

On a personal level, Churchill had to work most directly with the three service chiefs. These men had to bear the brunt of his frequent temper storms and translate his desires into plans and orders. Of all the members of the COS, those who suffered most from these storms were the holders of the office of CIGS (Chief of the Imperial General Staff). That office was held for a brief period by Gen. Edmund Ironside, but after the evacuation at Dunkirk he was succeeded by Gen. Sir John Dill, a talented, honest, and thoroughly professional officer. Unfortunately, he could not stand up to Churchill's brusqueness of manner. As Schoenfeld writes, "Churchill in debate could use harsh language that he never intended in spirit, and it must have been difficult for Dill to bear accusations of being 'the dead hand of inanition.'"

In November of 1941, during the most bitter days of the war, Churchill replaced Dill with Sir Alan Brooke. This relationship too had its time of trial and stress, but it survived and eventually led Britain to victory. Many of those periods of stress are related by Schoenfeld, and it is a fascinating account. Brooke himself remarked of the experience: "He is the most difficult man I have ever served, but thank God for having given me the opportunity of trying to serve such a man. . . ."

Like many another chief of state in wartime, Churchill was often tempted to involve himself in the military direction of the war effort. It is Schoenfeld's

judgment that "Churchill was rather quick to become involved in dictating tactical operations to a responsible commander on the scene." Because he had been First Lord during the first war and perhaps too because he had a sailor's love of ships, Churchill found it most tempting of all to meddle in the affairs of the Royal Navy. He met with failure as often as success in his attempts, but his rationale for doing so was clear. Standing at the center of the war effort, Churchill believed that viewing it in its fullness was important. And he, of course, was the one man who could do so. But Schoenfeld is quick to remind us that although the mistakes he made playing this role should not be exaggerated, "neither should they be ignored or excused."

Mr. Schoenfeld's work does not "debunk" Churchill nor does it even tarnish the image of the hero. What it does is to make that hero more real, more vital, and more believable as one of the most significant *dramatis personae* of recent world history.

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Watson, Alan. *Europe at Risk*. London: George G. Harrap & Co., Ltd., 1972. 224p.

Can Europe leave behind the outmoded concepts of narrowly based nationalism which have characterized the politics of her constituent peoples since the rise of the nation-state and transform herself into a model of economic and political interdependence? Alan Watson in his recent book *Europe at Risk* would seem to answer yes, but perhaps while his work is both highly readable and informative, the reader comes away feeling more that the Western European nations should move toward some form of federalized union rather than being convinced that, in fact, they will.

The case for a united Western Europe<sup>3</sup>