

Winston Churchill-His
Political Exile 1931-39

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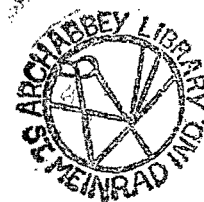


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Introduction

Everyone is aware of the great contributions of Winston Churchill during times of world crisis. This thesis is an attempt to study Churchill during a time of political exile. I chose the period of 1931-39 for this study and furthermore I viewed these years primarily through the eyes of the man himself. Therefore, this treatise is not entirely objective. There certainly are critics of Churchill and this period in English and world history but we shall study these problems as Churchill saw them.

Winston Churchill always kept abreast of world events. He decried the lack of military preparation on the part of the English, the movements of the Germans into the Rhineland, Austria and Czechoslovakia, the French allowing the take over of Czechoslovakia, and the United States' lack of action in the troubled European Theatre. We learn from Churchill about some of the British leaders in power during this period, MacDonald, Baldwin, Eden and Chamberlain. Churchill gives us first hand information concerning the relations of the allied countries as Hitler readied his forces for an eventual conflict.

His primary objective was the safety and well-being of his people and those from other parts of the world. No matter how high the tide of unpopularity rose against him, he was able to maintain that certain psychic distance so that he might be able to warn against those perils which throughout history have threatened man's existence. 1931-39 not only proved Churchill's foresight and knowledge but his unending devotion to humanity and all that that entails. His thoughts however, were not always held as the criterion for the well-being of

the world. When the world wanted only to hear sounds of peace, Churchill's voice rang out with the terrible noise that all was not well.

Chapter I

Winston Churchill 1931-33

In 1931 Winston Churchill was very much his own man. Out of formal government and political acrobatics, he held the official position of an outside observer, and from this vantage point made the most of his observations. Winston Churchill, after so ably performing and dedicating himself to the democratic processes of his government, throughout the early decades of the twentieth century had no real political outlet. However, being a man with no use for the word defeat, he collected his mighty talents and aspired to put them to their best use during his political exile. Perhaps it can be said that it was precisely this detached observance which enabled him to recognize what illed Britain and Europe. Regardless, it is an important fact that he did not sit idly by.

Had he not been so adamant over the issue of dominion status for India in 1929 he might have found himself in the government of 1931 under Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay McDonald. Unfortunately his stand on the Indian policy cost him his political tenure for the time being. He alienated certain leaders of the Conservative Party namely, Conservative Party leader Stanley Baldwin. With the country and government clamoring for unity, Churchill spread discord. To be sure, his arguments were logical and precise and pointed out discretions within the policy wanted by the English government. However, the time was not right for him to serve as the conscience of the British government and Parliament.

Unfortunately this last sentence proved all too true especially concerning Churchill's forebodings of danger from

the Germans. Churchill followed closely the progress of the German resurgence. He knew it would happen and as early as the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, he felt that precautions should be taken to avert another world war. This one he feared might destroy mankind because man was moving closer to the brink of destroying himself with his newfound methods of warfare. He agreed with Marshal Foch, who having heard of the Peace Treaty of Versailles stated, "This is not peace. It is an armistice for twenty years."¹ After the Armistice, Churchill feared the outcome.

That is why he noticed the German election results and tried to grasp the temperament of their people. What he saw, he feared. Germany wanted to rearm, something they had been secretly doing since the Treaty of Versailles, and for Churchill this was intolerable. He understood the German goal and detested the fact that the allies did little if anything to halt a very dangerous movement. In the House of Commons he explained the German mentality this way:

"All these bands of sturdy Teutonic youths, marching through the streets and roads of Germany, with the light of desire in their eyes to suffer for their Fatherland, are not looking for status. They are looking for weapons, believe me they will then ask for the return of lost territories and lost colonies, and when that demand is made it cannot fail to shake and possibly shatter to their foundations every one of the countries I have mentioned, and some other countries I have not mentioned."²

Not holding political office during this period did not stop him from expressing his mind.

One of his more vociferous arguments was the issue of disarmament. Despite the prevailing disturbances in Germany, the MacDonald-Baldwin Government insisted on carrying out the disarmament plans stated in the Treaty of Versailles. Realizing the modest allied armaments and the rearming process presently taking place in Germany, Churchill figured this

policy was tantamount to suicide. The allied leaders simply had their heads in the sand, he thought. Their leniency in enforcing Germany to abide by the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles and making just reparations and at the same time follow the disarmament plan themselves was both ludicrous and ridiculous. They were disarming to their own disadvantage. Their security system was fast becoming non-existent or meaningless considering the threat of the German menace. Churchill was sure that the British did not understand the extent of the threat posed by the new Reich.

A valid reason for his fear was that the British Government still insisted that France disarm to an almost nullifying level. The French understandably refused because they were in a more proximate area to Germany. England was not part of the continent and therefore more removed from the immediacy of the situation, the French argued. They insisted that should they disarm to the English specifications then the English had better be prepared to sign a treaty which would have them come to France's aid in the event of German aggressions. They had felt the sting of the German bee in the past and wished to avoid another war confrontation. Parity of arms between Germany and France almost certainly meant the start of new aggressions. Churchill felt that an armed France was considerably better than an ambitious Germany, and especially a well-armed Germany. In May of 1932, he told the House of Commons:

"I should very much regret to see any approximation in military strength between Germany and France. Those who speak of that as though it were right, or even a question of fair dealing, altogether underrate the gravity of the European situation. I would say to those who would like to see Germany and France on an equal footing in armaments: 'Do you wish for war?' For my part, I earnestly hope that no such approximation will take place during my lifetime or that of my children. To say that is not

in the least to imply any want of regard or admiration for the great qualities of the German people, but I am sure that the thesis that they should be placed in an equal military position with France is one which, if it even emerged in fact, would bring us within practical distance of almost measureless calamity."

As far as British security was concerned Churchill warned his leaders, in March of 1933, that British air power was totally inefficient to cope with the onslaught of an enemy. Britain was rated as the fifth air power and Germany was secretly and rapidly reaching parity. He warned of an impending disaster if the air program were not resumed and at a rate which would be indicative of present events. Churchill could not make his fellows understand or perhaps they understood all too well and refused to accept the reality of the situation. It was imperative that they awaken soon because by March of 1933 Germany, the vanquished, was accepted by the allies, the victors, as an equal in status. In turn this led the Germans to demand an equality of strength which soon followed. This in fact established the premature military parity between France and Germany which Churchill had greatly feared. By the close of 1933 all of Europe witnessed Germany, now under Chancellor Adolf Hitler, withdraw from the Disarmament Conference and League of Nations, apparently being very satisfied with the concessions and lack of resolve on the part of the allies. Churchill had tried his best to ensure that precisely this would not take place. It was not enough.

Churchill felt strongly about the United States' lack of insight into the European theatre. He understood that their current economic difficulties helped to take their attention off of the situation but at the same time he could not reconcile the fact that many leaders in the United States failed to grasp the gravity of the problem. Should they have done so, Churchill believed that their immense power would have lent the necessary weight to force Germany to abide by the condi-

tions of the Treaty of Versailles and consequently keep the German menace muzzled. For Churchill it was imprudent for the United States to do otherwise because he foresaw that the next world war would touch the United States personally. It was not just a matter of European defense but a world defense with all nations involved. The United States could not afford to stand as an unbiased observer because the next war might touch her shores. His views on the United States were for the most part first hand information. In 1931, Churchill came to this country for a series of lectures. He gave forty in all.

When Winston Churchill was not involved in "The India Defense League" and in general being critical of Britain's policies, he was either dictating articles, establishing some important friendships or finishing his work, Marlborough: His Life and Times. One of his closest friends was Professor Frederick Lindemann who taught Experimental Philosophy at Oxford University. This friendship served to a great advantage for Churchill because Professor Lindemann understood the methods of modern warfare and put great emphasis on air defense. He helped Churchill see the scope and immenseness of what another war would mean to the peoples of the world. Churchill began thinking in accord with Professor Lindemann's idea about the new and important role air warfare would mean and he became very conscious of the need for a more than adequate air defense.

Two other men, Desmond Morton and Ralph Wigram, were also important friends for Churchill. Morton had access to Intelligence information and with the permission of the Prime Minister, he would disclose to Churchill this information to keep him well informed concerning the tide of affairs. Wigram was in the Foreign Office and confided in Churchill. Both men shared the same view of the Hitler movement and both saw that the situation was indeed becoming more remote and dark everyday. From these men and other foreign ministers who share Churchill's confidence, he was able to decipher the

world situation and consequently be able to step in when the time deemed it necessary.

Chapter II

Winston Churchill 1934-35

At the dawn of 1934, Winston Churchill still maintained his concern about an impending disaster. Needless to say, his forebodings were not accepted by either the British populace or its ministers. There are approximately six reasons why Churchill's warnings went unheeded: "(1) the British idea that armaments were a cause of war; (2) the belief that rearmament was a blow to the League of Nations; (3) that Europe must achieve disarmament in the Conference that was called in 1932 if she was ever to have peace; (4) the feeling that Britain had undertaken unilateral disarmament in the Twenties and should try to continue that policy; (5) the great strength of the pacifist movement; (6) and the feeling of separation from the continent and consequent immunity."¹ As far as armaments were concerned, the British believed that their naval power was sufficient enough to thwart any kind of enemy offensive. This stemmed from the fact that they still considered themselves immune from events on the continent because of their idea of an island immunity. Little did they realize what impact air warfare would mean in respect to the concept of island immunity.

Churchill however, concentrated much of his efforts on informing his countrymen of the consequences of an inadequate air corps. While a total feeling of pacifism enveloped the British people, Churchill spoke out in March of 1934:

"We are, it is admitted, the fifth air Power only--if that. We are but half the strength of France, our nearest neighbor. Germany is arming fast and no one is going to stop her. That seems quite clear. No one proposes a pre-

ventive war to stop Germany breaking the Treaty of Versailles. She is going to arm; she is doing it; she has been doing it. I have no knowledge of the details, but it is well known that those very gifted people, with their science and with their factories--with what they call their 'Air-Sport'--are capable of developing with great rapidity the most powerful air force for all purposes, offensive and defensive, within a very short period of time."²

In 1934, provisions had been set aside to build four new squadrons, a squadron being from ten to twelve first-line planes. This move would increase Britain's already small air force from 850 to 890 planes. This was not a great step, considering the air superiority of other nations.

Germany had violated the Treaty of Versailles by building an Air Force. What was difficult to discover was its strength. Cleverly disguising the forbidden build-up by calling their actions "Civil Aviation" and "Passive Air Defense," the Germans were preparing a force which, when realized, would become devastating. Their factories, training facilities and methods were capable of amassing a great force when used at their fullest potential. Churchill realized this and questioned the British Government about their lack of action. In many instances, his statistics and those obtained by the government were extremely different. The latter believed that there was no real threat, whereas Churchill projected the problem in the future where he foresaw England's forces totally unprepared and inadequate. John F. Kennedy in his thesis, Why England Slept, said it this way: "one of England's great mistakes lay in measuring all yearly increases in her program and appropriation by the standards of the previous years....She did 'not' measure her efforts by the war effort Germany, in the same year, was putting out."³ This was to cause a considerable lag on England's part when they were faced with the very real prospects of war in 1936, after Germany had begun aggressions by reoccupying the

Rhineland.

It is important to remember that the English were still firmly convinced that a lasting peace could be attained through the Disarmament Conference and League of Nations. Even though Germany had withdrawn from the Conference in October of 1933 and Japan in 1934, there still existed a feeling of optimism for world peace through unilateral agreement and disarmament. Churchill hoped for this, but at the same time realized the impossibility of this outcome because of Germany's intentions. The British opinion of Germany availed Hitler of a great opportunity to rearm at an alarming rate. Many of England's citizens sympathized with Germany's plight. They felt if the other powers in the Disarmament talks would not disarm to Germany's level, then Germany should be allowed to build up to their military levels. Hitler took great advantage of this because the participating countries were not unified in either opposition to Germany or support of their cause. This diversification of opinion offered ample opportunities for Hitler to assemble a powerful military force under the guise of self-preservation.

Churchill searched for ways to awaken the English people. He saw that Germany was taking advantage of the allied inaction. The Lord President of the Council, Baldwin, seemed to understand to some extent, the need for a strong air corps when he said in 1934: "Let us never forget this, since the day of the air, the old frontiers are gone. When you think of the defense of England you no longer think of the chalk cliffs of Dover. You think of the Rhine--that is where our frontier lies."⁴ For Churchill, Baldwin's actions indicated differently. If air defense was of prime importance for Baldwin, why, then, Churchill would ask, is there no substantial build-up of the air corps? This position was leaving England quite vulnerable.

When on July 20, 1934, the Government sought to

strengthen the Royal Air Force by forty-one squadrons (and this to be completed in five years), the Labor Party as well as the Liberals voiced their disapproval. It was felt that more arms would be tantamount to military aggression and a threat to the already ill-fated Disarmament Conference. To be sure, the Disarmament Conference was at this point pretty much a fiasco, but the British leaders still hoped that the Conference would internationalize all air forces and reduce armaments. In return, this would make any armament increase unnecessary. As England waited and hoped for unilateral disarmament, other countries, especially Germany, amassed larger forces.

Had the German intentions been good, then the Liberal leader, Sir Herbert Samuel, could trust his conscious concerning disarmament. In 1934, in response to the proposal forty-one new squadrons, he said: "What is the case in regard to Germany? Nothing we have so far seen or heard would suggest that our present air force is not adequate to meet any peril at the present time from this quarter."⁵ There was some justification for this argument. He believed that since Germany was the only real enemy within striking distance, there was no cause for rearmament. Germany was not suppose to rearm but did so anyway. Sir Herbert Samuel's protestations then were completely inaccurate and harmful for the welfare of both England and the Continent. The problem arose that if Germany was found to be acting against the Treaty, England would have to declare the Treaty null and void or use force to end the German rearmament. At this time no one, especially England, was prepared to go to war with Germany. The Germans had a clear path on the road of rearmament, particularly in the field of air power.

Concerning these dire events, Churchill's voice again rang out,

"I first assert that Germany has already,
in violation of the Treaty, created

'a military air force which is now nearly two-thirds as strong as our present home defence air force!! That is the first statement which I put before the Government for their consideration. The second is that Germany is rapidly increasing this air force, not only by large sums of money which figure in her estimates, but also by public subscriptions--very often almost forced subscriptions--which are in progress and have been in progress for some time all over Germany. 'By the end of 1935, the German air force will be nearly equal in numbers and efficiency to our home defence air force at that date even if the Government's present proposals are carried out!! The third statement is that if Germany continues this expansion and if we continue to carry out our scheme, then some time in 1936 Germany will be definitely and substantially stronger in the air than Great Britain. Fourthly, and this is the point which is causing anxiety, once they have got that lead we may never be able to overtake them."

The censure against constructing of the new squadrons was defeated, but this addition was still totally inadequate.

The Winter Session of Parliament in 1934 provided opportunity for debate between Churchill and Baldwin. Citing that Germany already had an air force and that by 1935 it would be comparable with England's and by 1937 it would overtake the Crown's, Churchill begged Baldwin to discuss the facts. Prepared with statistics provided by Air Ministry advisors, Baldwin dismissed Churchill's alligations as false. His facts showed that by 1935 England's air superiority would be fifty percent and the same would apply for 1936. However he did admit that he could not foretell what the situation might be in 1937 and beyond. Churchill wondered aloud where Baldwin had secured his false data.

In effect, Churchill had warned his countrymen that Germany had indeed established a huge military apparatus by 1934, prepared to swing into full war production at a moments

notice. When operating at full efficiency she would soon mold a devastating arsenal. On the other hand, England had no such facilities on which to fall back on in case of an arms race or threat of war. The British leaders felt this was not necessary, since they held the mistaken statistics which falsely showed England's superiority. A study of the national defense expenditures of the great world powers will reveal what predicament England would find herself.

"NATIONAL DEFENSE EXPENDITURES OF THE WORLD
1931-36
(IN UNITED STATES DOLLARS)

| | 1931 | 1932 | 1933 | 1934 | 1935 | 1936 |
|----------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|---------|
| U.S. | 707.6 | 667.8 | 540.3 | 710.0 | 911.7 | 964.9 |
| France | 694.8 | 509.2 | 678.8 | 582.7 | 623.8 | 716.4 |
| Gr. Br. | 449.9 | 426.1 | 455.5 | 480.6 | 595.6 | 846.9 |
| Italy | 272.0 | 270.6 | 241.2 | 263.7 | 778.1 | 870.8 |
| U.S.S.R. | 280.8 | 282.5 | 309.5 | 1000.0 | 1640.0 | 2963.1 |
| Japan | 131.8 | 199.1 | 253.1 | 271.9 | 296.2 | 307.2 |
| Germany | 246.8 | 253.5 | 299.5 | 381.8 | 2600.0 | 2600.0" |

In March of 1935, Churchill had the opportunity of saying "I told you so" when Hitler disclosed to the visiting British Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, and Mr. Eden that Germany had already reached air parity with England. The Government made this fact public, April 3. The country was shocked into the reality of the German menace. Earlier, on March 16, Germany had announced that she would begin conscription of civilians to serve in the armed forces. It was too late to hold back the German flood which was later to engulf everyone. Churchill's greatest pain and disappointment was that the country he so loved had fretted away its chance for peace and maybe survival.

After Baldwin's genuine confession, ("Where I was wrong was in my estimate of the future. There I was completely wrong"),⁸ Churchill hoped that this would be the impetus for a British military resurgence. He thought it too late for England to achieve air parity with Germany and highly unlikely. However it was important to lay the foundation for

curing the military gap. To a great extent this did not occur.

Why did the English postpone the armament drive after deciding to go ahead with it in the latter stages of 1934 and in 1935? This caused a year lapse which was time the English could ill-afford the luxury of losing. 1935 was an election year for the English and what took place caused much of the delay. English opinion remained high in favor of the League of Nations as a peace institution. However, it was becoming apparent to some of Britain's leaders that the League was totally inefficient and not of much use. For them to disclose this would have been political suicide. It meant that rearmament for purposes independent of the statutes of the League would go contrary to the opinions held by the general public. The Government was supposed to carry out its obligations but was denied the right to rearm in order to meet those obligations. The truth is, that, if the League and Treaties of Versailles and Locarno were adhered to, then there would be no need for rearming. In reality, this was not so. The candidates and their Parties, then, took a political stance which catered to the idea that rearming was not necessary and even detrimental. They deceived the citizenry to win an election. The Conservatives won and Stanley Baldwin was now Prime Minister. Churchill remained on the outside, but not of his own choosing.

1935 also saw Italy join ranks with Germany. The circumstances surrounding this episode helped the English to reach a new low. Before this, Mussolini's Italy had been pretty much of a positive factor, especially in her efforts to keep Germany from fulfilling her plans for Austria. The English-Italian conflict occurred when Mussolini decided to conquer Abyssinia by force. Further complicating the issue was the Franco-Italian agreement of January 1935. France definitely considered Germany more of a threat than Italy and she was prepared to concentrate the greater part of her forces toward

the East. Because Abyssinia was a member of the League of Nations, she applied for help. England prepared to to her aid. She demanded that sanctions be placed against Italy for its designs upon Abyssinia. Supporting her action, she sent the British Fleet to the Mediterranean.

Churchill warned the Government that England was not strong enough or capable of enforcing this course of action. On July 1, he addressed Parliament,

"We seemed to have allowed the impression to be created that we were ourselves coming forward as a sort of bellwether or fogleman to lead opinion in Europe against Italy's Abyssinian designs. It was even suggested that we would act individually and independently. I am glad to hear from the Foreign Secretary that there is no foundation for that. We must do our own duty, but we must do it with other nations only in accordance with the obligations which others recognise as well. We are not strong enough to be the lawgiver and the spokesman of the world. We will do our part, but we cannot be asked to do more than our part in these matters....

As we stand today there is no doubt that a cloud has come over the old friendship between Great Britain and Italy, a cloud which seems to me, may very easily not pass away, although undoubtedly it is everyone's desire that it should. It is an old friendship, and we must not forget, what is a little-known fact, that at the time Italy entered into the Triple Alliance in the last century she stipulated particularly that in no circumstances would her obligations under the alliance bring her into armed conflict with Great Britain."

The fact was that England stood alone against Italy.

Like Hitler, Mussolini forced England's hand by invading Abyssinia in October. The British recoiled from their earlier stance and signed the Hoare-Laval Pact of December 1935. This was a plan to partition Abyssinia, with Italy gaining the better part of it. This action not only

destroyed the British prestige; it also demeaned the League of Nations to a point where it was now literally meaningless. Hitler, liking what he saw of Italy, then proceeded on his plan for a Rome-Berlin Axis. Churchill's comment on the disaster of Abyssinia was: "There was now, as it turned out, little hope of averting war or of postponing it by a trial of strength equivalent to war. Almost all that remained open to France and Britain was to await the moment of the challenge and do the best they could."¹⁰

Churchill spent this crisis period at Barcelona with his wife. Frederick Lindemann, mentioned in the first chapter, was also present. Upon hearing the dire state of affairs, Churchill's first impulse was to return to his country and offer his services. However, his friends concurred that Churchill's return to England would be regarded as a challenge to the Government and would only make matters more chaotic. Not entirely happy with himself, he remained in Barcelona. After witnessing an unprecedented series of blunders by England's leaders, Churchill was becoming anxious to lay his hands upon England's military machines.

Chapter III

Winston Churchill 1936-39

On the advent of 1936, Winston Churchill saw a new political climate over the populace of England. They were now generally concerned about the German menace and the adulterous adventures of Mussolini. They wished that England would do her part so that she would be prepared for any armed contingency, namely, war. Fears abounded and they were not without some credibility. The Rome-Berlin axis was now a very real and dangerous threat. The British Government failed to respond to the cries of full and fast rearmament echoed from every corner of the island.

The British fears were realized when Hitler reoccupied the Rhineland on March 7, 1936. However, there still remained the hope that France and England would use force and influence to repudiate the reoccupation of the Rhineland. This move was clearly in violation of the Treaties of Locarno and Versailles. The Treaty of Versailles "declared that Germany should not have or establish fortifications on the left bank of the Rhine or within fifty kilometres of its right bank. Neither should Germany have in this zone any military forces, nor hold at any time any military manoeuvres, nor maintain any facilities for military mobilisation."¹ The Treaty of Locarno stated that any infringement of the Rhineland would be tantamount to an act of war. Clearly then, France, Britain and the other signatories were in a legal position to stop Germany. France was thrown into a state of confusion as to what to do. They did not want to act without England, and England did not want to act. Consequently, the dicker and inaction on the part of both countries afforded Germany exact-

ly what it wanted.

Churchill saw this as a good opportunity to thwart Hitler. If all the countries involved would only stand firm against Germany, then perhaps Germany would have to back down. The onslaught would be contained and maybe destroyed. It might have meant the end of Hitler because many of his generals convinced that they were being led by a "madman."² This might be his crushing blow. Churchill told all concerned that if England acted with France through the League of Nations, then there would be a better chance of averting war than if they both sat by and allowed this flagrant violation to exist. He was utterly powerless to do anything more, he held no position of authority to act. However, he did advise the French Foreign Minister M. Flandin to seek out Baldwin and bring this event to its lawful conclusion. He also spoke to those in English Government who would hear him.

At this time, there was scattered conversation about allowing Churchill to return to a more active political life. Some felt, Austen Chamberlain for one, that to exclude Churchill during this time of crisis was a great mistake. It was not to be; and, as Churchill later admitted, it was a blessing in disguise that he was an outsider during this debacle. He felt that this enhanced his outlook and power when he finally assumed complete control of the country. In this way, he was not directly responsible for the earlier deficiencies and could act in a quite independent manner.³

Constantly voicing his thoughts on those anxious filled moments of 1936, Churchill attacked Baldwin for not keeping his pledge that the country's air program would not be inferior to those countries within striking range of England. He said;

"The Government simply cannot make up their minds, or they cannot get the Prime Minister to make up his mind. So they go on in strange paradox, decided only to be undecided, resolved to be

irresolute, adamant for drift, solid for fluidity, all-powerful to be impotent. So we go on preparing more months and years--precious, perhaps vital, to the greatness of Britain--for the locusts to eat."⁴

Baldwin's reply to Churchill was startling. It is lengthy but I feel it is of utmost importance to quote the entire speech.

"We started late and I want to say a word about the years the locusts have eaten. I want to speak to the House with the utmost frankness....I would remind the House that not once but on many occasions in speeches and in various places, when I have been advocating as far as I am able the democratic principle, 'I have stated that a democracy is always two years behind the dictator.' I believe this to be true in this case. I put before the whole House my own views with appalling frankness. From 1933, I and all my friends, were all very worried about what was happenign in Europe. You will remember at that time the Disarmament Conference was sitting in Geneva. You will remember at that time there was probably a stronger pacifist feeling running through this country than at any time since the War. I am speaking of 1934-35. You will remember the election at Fulham in the autumn of 1933, when a seat which the National Government held was lost by about 7,000 votes on no issue but the pacifist. You will remember, perhaps, that the National Government candidate who made a most guarded reference to the question of defence was mobbed for it. That was the feeling in the country in 1933.

My position as the leader of a great party was not altogether a comfortable one. I asked myself what chance was there--when that feeling that was given expression to in Fulham was common throughout the country. What chance was there within the next two years of that feeling being so changed that the country would give a mandate for rearmament? Supposing I had gone to the country and

said that Germany was rearming and that we must rearm, does anybody think that this pacific democracy would have rallied to that cry at the moment? 'I cannot think of anything that would have made the loss of the election from my point of view more certain.' I think the country itself learned by certain events that took place during the winter of 1934-35 what the perils might be to it. 'All I did was to take a moment perhaps less fortunate than another might have been, and we won the election by a large majority; but frankly I could conceive that we should at that time, by advocating certain courses, have been a great deal less successful.' We got from the country, with a large majority, a mandate for doing a thing that no one, twelve months before, would have believed possible.

It is my firm conviction that had the Government, with this great majority used the majority to do anything that might be described as armign without a mandate-- and they did not do anything, except the slightly increased air program--for which they gave their reasons-- had I taken such action as Mr. Churchill desired me to take, it would have defeated entirely the end I had in view. I may be wrong, but I put that to the House as an explanation of my action in that respect."⁵

One need not look too hard to see the implications of Baldwin's speech. As Churchill stated, Baldwin had run the gamut of indecency by placing an election win over national security. He should have instead told the country what he feared, namely the German resurgence, and then it would be his duty to inform the public and try to take the appropriate stance, even if that called for rearmament. Instead, he deceived the public into thinking that disarmament and pacifism were their only recourse. Churchill bitterly attacked Baldwin's action by calling it "an incident without parrallel in our parliamentary history."⁶

The reaction of Baldwin's speech was that it drew many people together. Churchill now thought that something worth-

while could be done to ready the island for an eventual war. One thing, however, quickly stole the attention of the people--the abdication of Edward VIII in December for the woman he loved. At this juncture, Churchill begged the people not to forget the important matter of total rearmament although emotions ran high for the king and his love affair. The patience Churchill sought, sounded cold to the people and his popularity and political life reached a new low. For the moment his stance was all but obliterated. Only a personal letter from the new King, George VI, gave Churchill the inspiration he sorely needed.

Prior to Edward VIII's abdication, Churchill attacked the Government's White Paper on Defense of March 11, 1936. Churchill maintained that the armament effort was too little and inadequate. He had been able to secure reliable information that Germany was spending one thousand million pounds sterling per annum on their armaments. We see then from the earlier military expenditure chart that Germany was spending about two-thirds more than England. At this rate England could never hope to reach parity with the German armaments, but Churchill wanted to see immediate action so that England would not be caught completely flat-footed. If, indeed, a democracy was two years behind a dictatorship, then England was in serious trouble and under a pressing obligation to heal her wounds.

In response to Churchill, the government stated that there was still a chance for peace through military treaties. It cited the recent naval treaty with Germany in June, 1935, which allowed Germany to rebuild her navy and build U-boats on the British scale. However, it also admitted that there was a general rearmament in all countries and that she would take that course if necessary. Churchill said it was imperative. He asked for a Ministry of Supply on May 21, 1936, to aid the Ministry of the Co-ordination of Defense. In this way the defense might be able to operate in a more effective

manner. The Government declined, saying that this would call for dictatorial powers.⁷

Churchill also attacked the "shadow factory scheme" proposed by the White Paper. This scheme would have factories manufacture only certain parts of the airplane. All the parts then would be assembled at another plant. This idea differed from the Germans and United States method of building aircraft all at one plant. There were obvious drawbacks to the "shadow factory scheme." One was that an air raid could demolish one important plant and consequently halt the building of airplanes. Another fault was that it would take a couple years at least to establish the system since all the factories were experiencing something new. Churchill argued that this method would be too costly as far as time was concerned and it was potentially dangerous should a major factory be destroyed.

Add to this the fact that the French Air Force was not as powerful as it once was. About the time Germany reached air parity with England, France allowed her air apparatus to dwindle and become obsolete. Money was hard to obtain, factories became obsolete and the French models became outmoded. Churchill told his peers that this caused the British air estimates to be inaccurate. Britain counted on a strong air force from France. Churchill argued that this was not the case. Not until 1938 were steps taken to rectify the French air position.

Even though Churchill had little political power at this time, he enjoyed the confidence of many of the leading world rulers and ambassadors. In 1937, one such meeting proved forboding. He met with Herr von Ribbentrop, the German Ambassador to Britain, and confided in him that Britain would not stand by should Germany have any designs against Central and Eastern Europe. At this, Ribbentrop said, "In that case, war is inevitable. There is no way out. The Fuehrer is resolved. Nothing will stop him and nothing will stop us."⁸

Churchill warned Ribbentrop to beware of England but, as history has proven, it came to no avail.

On May 28, 1937, Mr. Baldwin retired and Mr. Neville Chamberlain succeeded him. This brought about a great series of changes. Whereas Baldwin disliked meddling in foreign affairs, Chamberlain thought himself quite competent to handle them alone. He was confident he could bring the world leaders together and avoid war by a series of treaties and "appeasements."⁹ From the Baldwin Administration, he inherited Anthony Eden as his Foreign Secretary. Eden was a close friend of Winston Churchill; and, concerning many of the main problems facing England, they agreed on what action should be taken. Eden was alarmed at the slow rate that England was rearming. He was convinced that war was indeed inevitable, nothing would stop Hitler now.¹⁰ Chamberlain thought otherwise. He wanted rearmament but he was convinced of his power to settle the question safely through agreement. Eden's days as Foreign Secretary were numbered. This disturbed Churchill, for he felt that Eden was the only major leader who fully understood the gravity of the political atmosphere. To dismiss Eden, Churchill believed, might be a serious mistake on Chamberlain's part. By February 20, 1938, the gulf between Chamberlain and Eden over foreign policy was unbridgeable and Eden resigned. Churchill was deeply disturbed for the first time in his life. He saw Eden as England's last hope.¹¹ Lord Halifax now became Foreign Secretary.

Hitler occupied Austria on March 11, 1938, and began his conquest of Europe in earnest. Austria served as a strategic position for Hitler's proposed European onslaught. Churchill confronted the House of Commons on March 14,

"The gravity of the event of March 12 cannot be exaggerated. Europe is confronted with a programme of aggression, nicely calculated and timed, unfolding stage by stage, and there is only one choice open, not only to us but to other countries, either to submit like

Austria, or else take effective measures while time remains to ward off the danger, and if it cannot be warded off to cope with it....If we go on waiting upon events, how much shall we throw away of resources now available for our security and the maintenance of peace? How many friends will be alienated, how many potential allies shall we see go one by one down the grisly gulf? How many times will bluff succeed until blind bluff ever-gathering forces have accumulated reality?.....'Where are we going to be two years hence, for instance, when the German Army will certainly be much larger than the French Army,' and when all the small nations will have fled from Geneva to pay homage to the ever-waxing power of the Nazi system, and to make the best terms that they can for themselves?"¹²

As it turned out, Hitler pretty well had his way without much opposition. Churchill was incensed at this and also the agreement signed between Great Britain and Ireland. In 1938 Great Britain agreed to leave the naval ports of Queenstown and Berehaven. From his past naval experience, Churchill was aware of the naval importance of the two ports. He could not understand why Britain would take such action when war was impending. Both ports were important for re-fuelling and protection.

After Austria, it was just a short step for Hitler to pursue his plans for Czechoslovakia. Hitler felt that France and Britain would not go to war over his plans for the Czechs. France had signed a treaty with Czechoslovakia in 1924 to come to her aid in case of any of any aggression against her and France reiterated this in 1938. Without conferring with the U.S.S.R., an ally of Czechoslovakia, France sought a pledge from England to help out in any eventuality. England would not totally commit herself. Churchill thought it about time that a united front should be presented to Hitler to halt his advancements. This was not to be. Chamberlain flew to Munich to confer with Hitler and he agreed to give Germany

those areas of the Sudetenland which were predominantly German. The French followed suit and this was agreed upon independently of Russia. The Czechs were never consulted on this matter, and France was clearly in violation of her treaty with Czechoslovakia. On September 21, President Benes of Czechoslovakia accepted the agreement and Czechoslovakia was now Hitler's.

Churchill was upset over this latest episode and on September 21, issued this statement:

"The partition of Czechoslovakia under pressure from England and France amounts to the complete surrender of the Western Democracies to the Nazi threat of force. Such a collapse will bring peace or security neither to England nor to France. On the contrary, it will place these two nations in an ever-weaker and more dangerous situation. The mere neutralisation of Czechoslovakia means the liberation of twenty-five German divisions, which will threaten the Western Front; in addition to which it will open up for the triumphant Nazis the road to the Black Sea. It is not Czechoslovakia alone which is menaced, but also the freedom and the democracy of all nations. The belief that security can be obtained by throwing a small state to the wolves is a fatal delusion. The war potential of Germany will increase in a short time more rapidly than it will be possible for France and Great Britain to complete the measures necessary for their defence."¹³

Now the entire situation was out of control and Churchill's name was mentioned constantly. Many felt that now was the appropriate time for Winston to take control and ready the country. Accordingly, on September 1, 1939, he was given an Admiralty and seat on the War Cabinet. He fulfilled his obligations there until May 10, 1940 when King George VI asked Churchill to form a new government. He accepted humbly.

Conclusion

In examining these nine years of Churchill's political exile we see that he remained very much on top of things. Many questions arise then as to why his words were not instrumental in forming England's policies so that the Second World War could have been avoided. One of the better answers I have found is Stephen R. Graubard's account;

"Churchill was not wanted because Churchill showed qualities which few in the Tory Party, and even fewer outside, admired or understood. He was too difficult; in the 1924-29 Cabinet, his interventions had slowed the work of the Cabinet. He was insufficiently loyal; his decision to oppose Baldwin on India showed that. He was too critical; he had not been kind to any of the governments which had not availed themselves of his services. And, perhaps, most of all, he was too frank. In 1933, in a speech before the Royal Society of St. George, he had said: 'Historians have noticed, all down the centuries, one peculiarity of the English people which has cost them dear. We have always thrown away after a victory the greater part of the advantages we gained in the struggle. The worst difficulties from which we suffer do not come from without. They come from within. They do not come from the cottages of the wage-earners. They come from a peculiar type of brainy people always found in our country, who, if they add something to its culture, take much from its strength. Our difficulties come from the mood of unwarrantable self-abasement into which we have been cast by a powerful section of our own intellectuals. They come from the acceptance of defeatist doctrines by a large proportion of our politicians. But what have they to offer but a vague

internationalism, a squalid materialism, and the promise of impossible Utopias?' " 1.

This seems as valid a theory as any.

It is true, that this thesis for the most part, examined Churchill's political exile through his own eyes. Therefore it is not as objective as can be, but this was intended. However, Churchill, the man, must be highly admired for his unselfishness and unending devotion to his country and mankind. He could have easily disengaged himself altogether; instead, he went ahead, using his talents in the capacity which would be best suited for his fellow men. Although he bruised a few egos in the process, his contributions during this period were a great benefit to the English people when they were finally faced with the need for a leader who could save the country during World War II.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I

¹Winston S. Churchill, The Gathering Storm (Cambridge), p.1.

²Stephen R. Graubard, Burke, Disraeli, and Churchill (Cambridge), p.210.

³Winston S. Churchill, The Gathering Storm (Cambridge), p.72.

CHAPTER II

¹John F. Kennedy, Why England Slept (New York),
p.22.

²Winston S. Churchill, The Gathering Storm
(Cambridge), p.112.

³John F. Kennedy, Why England Slept (New York),
p.77.

⁴Ibid., p.75.

⁵Winston S. Churchill, The Gathering Storm
(Cambridge), p.115.

⁶Ibid., p.116-117.

⁷John F. Kennedy, Why England Slept (New York),
p.113.

⁸Winston S. Churchill, The Gathering Storm
(Cambridge), p.123.

⁹Ibid., p.168.

¹⁰Alan Bullock, Hitler, A Study in Tyranny
(New York), p.341.

CHAPTER III

¹Winston S. Churchill, The Gathering Storm
(Cambridge), p.192.

²Ibid., p.312.

³Ibid., p.201.

⁴Ibid., p.215.

⁵John F. Kennedy, Why England Slept (New York),
p.140-141.

⁶Winston S. Churchill, The Gathering Storm
(Cambridge), p.216.

⁷John F. Kennedy, Why England Slept (New York),
p.134-135.

⁸Winston S. Churchill, The Gathering Storm
(Cambridge), p.223.

⁹John F. Kennedy, Why England Slept (New York),
p.156-157.

¹⁰Winston S. Churchill, The Gathering Storm
(Cambridge), p.240.

¹¹Ibid., p.257-258.

¹²Ibid., p.272.

¹³Ibid., p.303.

CONCLUSION

¹Stephen R. Graubard, Burke, Disraeli, and Churchill (Cambridge), p.214.

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