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Churchill (1874-1965)

Man and mystery

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Editorial

The British Premier

To anyone disenchanted by the current squabbling at Westminster, a turn of perspective towards the past offers helpful respite. Where better to look than towards the long and eventful life of Winston Churchill, whose one-hundred-and-thirtyfifth birthday is celebrated in this issue of *British Politics Review*.

Churchill's political life covers half a century in Parliament, including some of the most decisive moments for British politics. During the Second World War, not only Britain's future, but the survival of a set of values stretching far beyond the British Isles, were at stake. No little task for a man who had by then reached his mid-sixties and whose political career had been characterised by controversy as much as acclaim. Twice crossing the floor of the House of Commons, Churchill had served in government under both Asquith and Baldwin and overseen a range of difficult decisions as Home Secretary and Chancellor. Churchill's political life was based on leadership and personal judgement, sometimes to the detriment of loyalty: "you do not win trust even where you command admiration... national interests are completely overshadowed by your personal concern", wrote the future Prime Minister, Lloyd George (himself not immune to the same charge) to him in 1916.

The length of Churchill's career is reflected by the scale of transformation during his political life. What became evident in the postwar era was that there were limits even to Churchill's capacity for renewal. His politics, moulded in the Edwardian era, was one of limited government and gentlemen's debate, his foreign policy characterised by imperial glory, civilising missions and military balancing of power. The ascendancy of social democracy symbolised by Labour's historic victory in 1945 was one development which collided with Churchill's world view; the disintegration of the British Empire was another. Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's African tour in 1960 with its statement of a "wind of change blowing through this continent" addressed a post-Churchill era where the old ways would no longer do.

Yet in so many domains it was Churchill who would supply the political parameters for his often less flamboyant successors in Parliament and government. His "three circles" defining the priorities of British foreign policy, his prophetic metaphor of the Iron Curtain heralding the Cold War in 1946 – and his strong advocacy of European unity in the wake of the Second World War: all testify to the forward-looking vision of Churchill.

A collection of Britain's own political struggles are mirrored in Winston Churchill's multifaceted career. Issues to debate abound, some of them are raised by the contributors on the following pages.

Øivind Bratberg and Kristin M. Haugevik, Editors

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Churchill and the British left

By John Callaghan

Class warrior and statesman. Before I was old enough to leave school for university I knew all about Winston Churchill - the war-monger and reactionary. My father, a working class socialist and veteran of D-Day, had told me the stories on many occasions, and there was never any doubt about the bitterness he felt towards him.



John Callaghan is a Professor of Politics and Contemporary History at the University of Salford. His research has focused on twentieth century socialist and communist politics and history. Among his recent publications are The Labour Party and Foreign Policy: A History (Routledge, 2007).

Churchill had built up this reputation over many decades and as a repeat offender. The beginning, years before my father was born, was during his short stint as Home Secretary in 1910-11 when he gave orders to send troops and Metropolitan police to break a docks strike in Newport South Wales. This might not have stuck in the memory had it not been followed, six months later in November 1910, by a second deployment of troops in South Wales - this time in the Rhondda valley during a coal strike - where the soldiery remained in occupation for eleven months. Even this was overshadowed by the disturbances in Liverpool during the dock and rail strike of August 1911. Here 50,000 troops were used and the soldiers actually fired at the dockers. HMS Antrim was moved up the Mersey to intimidate the population, while the army stepped in wherever it was needed to break the strike in the rest of Britain. Throughout these conflicts Churchill made no attempt to disguise his relish for the opportunity to defeat the unions.

Likewise Churchill was an open enthusiast for war and famous for his association with military blunders in a conflict - subsequently known as the First World War - which few on the British left had a good word for in the 1920s and 1930s. The biggest of these blunders was the Gallipoli campaign, though among his peers Churchill was already tarnished by failures associated with the siege of Antwerp in October 1914. Still, the intended capture of the Gallipoli peninsula in February 1915 was a much bigger disaster and Churchill, as its leading instigator, provided additional evidence to the anti-war minority of the small value which he attached to the lives of the lower orders.

These things might have been forgotten, or remembered differently in left-wing circles, had Churchill not emerged as the scourge of Bolshevism. But it was clear from the earliest weeks of Lenin's regime

that Churchill was its most determined foe and chief amongst those members of the British Government who wished to "strangle it in its cradle". His preferred image was of a Bolshevik plague which had to be exterminated at source. Churchill used his position in the War Office to urge a major military campaign to do precisely this - but at a time of immense war-weariness in Britain. When British support for Poland in its war with Bolshevik Russia threatened to renew direct military intervention, in August 1920, around 350 Councils of Action were set up to oppose war, with the support of the TUC and Labour Party. Once again, Churchill and the Labour movement were at opposite poles on a major issue.

Churchill was the minister in charge of the army when the struggle for Ireland's independence intensified in 1919 and 1920. The repression and thuggery associated with the "Black and Tans" began, and was justified, on his watch. When he became Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1921 Churchill became an advocate of using the RAF to keep order in colonial possessions such as Mesopotamia and the Sudan. He also approved the use of mustard gas in Mesopotamia, Afghanistan and China.

Of course he was an outspoken imperialist who preferred war to political concessions that might jeopardise imperial unity - whether in Ireland, Egypt, India or anywhere else. The same logic seemed to apply within Britain itself. As Chancellor of the Exchequer Churchill led the restoration of the Gold Standard in 1925 and continued the deflationary financial regime that had prevailed since 1920 - one of the causes of mass unemployment in the inter-war years and a major contributor to the industrial strife that led to the General Strike in May 1926.

During the nine days of the strike Churchill favoured the most humiliating defeat of the strikers, whom he regarded as "the enemy" to be destroyed. He also supported the most vindictive treatment of those who returned to work - for example opposing any attempts to persuade the government to relieve the suffering in the mining areas where the strike had lasted for months and people did not have enough to eat.

When Churchill's career fell into the doldrums in the early 1930s he attacked the leader of his own party - Stanley Baldwin

- for making concessions to nationalists everywhere from Cairo to Calcutta. All these constitutional concessions - largely designed to prolong British imperial rule - were denounced as evidence of appeasement. In Churchill's eyes M. K. Gandhi, the leader of the Indian national campaign since 1919, was, for example, a "malignant and subversive fanatic". The British Left - the home of most of the critics of war and imperialism - could only regard Churchill as a symbol of everything they feared and despised. As the threat from the fascist dictators grew after January 1933 a massive dilemma came into focus for the Left which can be summarised as the awareness of a need to prepare defences against aggression combined with a profound mistrust of Britain's governing elite, which could not be trusted to fight the right sort of war.

Prominent members of this elite hated the Soviet Union, had openly admired Mussolini and were intent on appeasing Hitler. Churchill had all of these credentials himself and showed no sympathy at all for the anti-Franco forces in the Spanish civil war. Only in 1938 did he call for a military alliance with France and the Soviet Union.

Churchill's modern reputation was forged during and after the Second World War. In the moment of supreme crisis Churchill galvanised the nation behind a policy of no surrender. He was a hero to all sections of British society - so much so that his only real critic in Parliament during five years of war was Aneurin Bevan, the post-war leader of the Labour Left-wing. But when a general election was called for July 1945 the old Churchill came back into view when he remarked that a Labour government "would have to fall back upon some sort of Gestapo".



The watershed. The electoral landslide in favour of Labour in 1945 was interpreted by some as a defiance of Churchill. Labour's campaign, however, was more concerned with its vision for the post-war welfare state.

The world was astonished when Labour won a majority of 146 seats over all other parties but throwing Churchill out, as my father often said, was one of the great achievements of democracy in Britain. When the Conservatives returned to office in 1951 the post-war economic boom was getting underway. Full employment and economic expansion in the early 1950s helped to reconcile the party to the reforms of 1945-51 while Churchill, who had lost interest in domestic politics anyway, focused his attention on maintaining Britain's global role.

High points and low points in Churchill's wartime leadership

By Sir Martin Gilbert

Leadership in War. I have made a close study during my Churchill work of the low points and high points of his war leadership. In this article, I have chosen seven low points between May and December 1940, all followed by high points that restored the fortune of Churchill as wartime Prime Minister. The many ebbs and flows of war affected his own confidence; yet, Churchill's trajectory as Prime Minister during this period represents statesmanship of singular quality.



Sir Martin Gilbert is Winston Churchill's official biographer and one of Britain's leading historians. Among the more than eighty books he has authored are Churchill: A Life (Heinemann, 1991) and Churchill and the Jews (Simon & Schuster, 2007). Sir Martin is also renown for his twin histories of the First and Second World War as well as The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy (Collins, 1986).

The first low point, from the earliest days of Churchill's premiership in May 1940, was the bleak outlook for Britain as German troops swept through Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and France, and continued their conquest of Norway. On the third, bleak day of Churchill's premiership, on May 13, his Military Secretary, General Ismay recalled, "I walked with him from Downing Street to the Admiralty. A number of people waiting outside the private entrance greeted him with cries of 'Good luck, Winnie. God bless you.' He was visibly moved, and as soon as we were inside the building, he dissolved into tears. 'Poor people,' he said, 'poor people. They trust me, and I can give them nothing but disaster for quite a long time.'"

The high point was the knowledge, not made explicit until 12 January 1941, from decrypted top secret German Enigma signals, that the German invasion of Britain had been called off.

The second low point was the continuing Conservative hostility after Churchill became Prime Minister. His first parliamentary speeches as Prime Minister were heard with much scepticism and silence from the Conservative backbenches. Churchill appealed to Parliament: "I say, let pre-war feuds die; let personal quarrels be forgotten, and let us keep our hatreds for the common enemy.... It has been my deliberate policy

to try to rally all the forces for the life and death struggle in which we are plunged, and to let bygones be bygones."

The high point was Churchill's speech defending the Royal Navy's destruction of the French Fleet at Oran, a brutal, necessary act of national self-preservation on the eve of a possible German invasion. At last the Conservatives applauded the action Churchill had taken and recognised, as did the nation, the qualities of his leadership.

My third low point was on the afternoon of 26 May 1940, at a meeting of the War Cabinet in Churchill's room in the House of Commons, when the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, suggested that, with regard to an Italian offer to mediate between Britain and Germany: "We might get better terms before France went out of the war and our aircraft factories were bombed, than we might get in three months time." The former Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain added, as the minutes of the meeting recorded, "that, while we would fight to the end to preserve our independence, we were ready to consider decent terms if such were offered to us."

Churchill believed that this willingness to consider "decent terms" was a misreading of the public mood, but he could not know for certain. At this point in the discussion, however, he had to ask for a break in the War Cabinet meeting - which had already

lasted two hours - to meet, for the first time since he had formed his Government sixteen days earlier, the twenty-five members of his administration who were not in the War Cabinet. That meeting had been arranged several days earlier. No sooner had these twenty-five Ministers come into his room - the War Cabinet having left - than Churchill told them that although Hitler would probably "take Paris and offer terms" he, Churchill, had no doubt whatever "that we must decline anything like this and fight on." To Churchill's astonishment, as he spoke the words "fight on" there was a sudden outpouring of support from the twenty-five Ministers assembled there - in the very room where the discussion about a negotiated peace had just taken place. Churchill was overwhelmed by this spontaneous determination for continuing the fight. It gave him added strength half an hour later, at the reconvened War Cabinet meeting, when he told Halifax and Chamberlain that he "did not remember having ever before heard a gathering of persons occupying high places in political life express themselves so emphatically." All talk of peacemaking was dropped. The high point had come within an hour and a half of the low point.

My fourth low point took place on 11 June 1940, when, the French Government having left Paris, Churchill flew to Braire on the Loire for a meeting of the Anglo-French Supreme War Council. At the start of the two-day meeting, General Weygand insisted that further French resistance was impossible, and Marshal Pétain made it clear that a Franco-German armistice was inevitable.

The high point took place five days later, on June 16. That day, General de Gaulle, still a member of the French administration, came to Britain and gave his authority (on the day that Pétain's emissaries, at Compiègne were seeking an armistice) whereby all French war material then on its way across the Atlantic from the United States would be diverted to Britain. In addition, all French munitions contracts in the United States (132 in all, including those for 965 bombers) would be transferred to full British control. Whatever disputes Churchill later had with De Gaulle, he never forgot the General's contribution to Britain's war effort at that testing time.



The conquest of Paris. Adolf Hitler posing in front of the Eiffel Tower with his architect Albert Speer (left) and his favorite sculptor Arno Breker, 23 June 1940. The successful German invasion was an early blow to Churchill's premiership.

High points and low points in Churchill's wartime leadership (cont.)

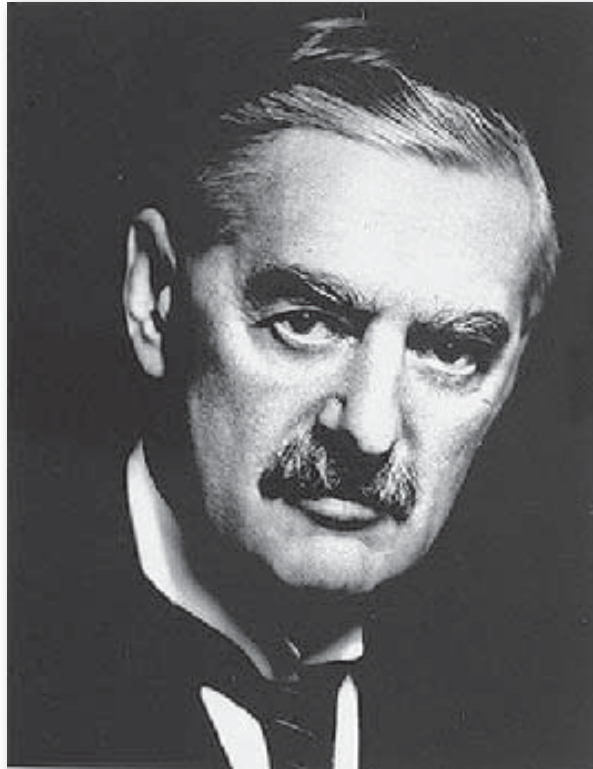
By Sir Martin Gilbert

My fifth low point was the sinking by German bombers of the Cunard liner turned troopship HMT *Lancastria* off St Nazaire, on 17 June 1940, with the death of more than 3,000 British soldiers and civilian refugees (Britain's worst maritime disaster, and one of the worst maritime disasters of the Second World War). It was such a blow that Churchill insisted no mention of it was made in the newspapers.

A maritime high point came swiftly. A day later, on June 18, two French scientists, Lew Kowarski and Hans von Halban, having made their way from Paris on roads crowded with refugees, were taken off safely from Bordeaux by collier, a ten-day sea journey to Southampton, zigzagging to avoid U-boats, bringing with them to Britain the whole supply of Heavy Water then available to Germany, twenty-six cans in all. For Churchill, one of the few who knew this setback to a German nuclear bomb, this was an enormous relief.

My sixth low point took place on 10 November 1940, when Churchill was informed by telephone from Downing Street that Neville Chamberlain had died. He at once wrote a letter in his own hand: "My dear Mrs Neville, I heard the news of Neville's death and your grievous loss with deep sorrow. During these long violent months of war we had come closer together than at any time in our twenty years of friendly relationship amid the ups and downs of politics. I greatly admired his fortitude and firmness of spirit. I felt when I served under him that he would never give in; and I knew when our positions were reversed that I could count upon the aid of a loyal and unflinching comrade."

For the so-recently bitterly divided nation, a high point in political reconciliation and national unity was Churchill's funeral oration, in which he told the House of Commons: "It fell to Neville Chamberlain in one of the supreme crises of the world to be contradicted by events, to be disappointed in his hopes, and to be deceived and cheated by a wicked man. But what were these hopes in which he was disappointed? What were



Affection behind rivalry. Neville Chamberlain, Churchill's predecessor as prime minister, was a prime target of his virulent appeasement critique; nevertheless, he was strongly admired by Churchill who despaired his death in November 1940.

these wishes in which he was frustrated? What was that faith that was abused? They were surely among the most noble and benevolent instincts of the human heart – the love of peace, the toil for peace, the strife for peace, the pursuit of peace, even at great peril and certainly to the utter disdain of popularity or clamour."

Churchill continued: "Whatever else history may or may not say about these terrible, tremendous years, we can be sure that Neville Chamberlain acted with perfect sincerity according to his lights and strove to the utmost of his capacity and authority, which were powerful, to save the world from the awful, devastating struggle in which we are now engaged."

My seventh and final low point was Roosevelt's insistence in the last week of December 1940 on the sale of all British assets

in the United States, and the hand over of the British gold reserves then

at Simonstown in South Africa before any further arms purchases would be allowed. In near despair, Churchill wrote to the President: "If you were to 'wash your hands of us' i.e. give us nothing we cannot pay for with suitable advances, we should certainly not give in, and I believe we could save ourselves and our own National interests for the time being. But we should certainly not be able to beat the Nazi tyranny and gain you the time you require for your re-armament...."

Churchill continued: "It is not fitting that any nation should put itself wholly in the hands of another, least of all a nation which is fighting under increasingly severe conditions for what is proclaimed to be a cause of general concern. If I have some word from you showing us where we stand, and that the United States is going to supply us with the thousands of millions of dollars worth of munitions which we shall need in 1941 and 1942 if Nazi-ism is to be beat, I will gladly give directions for any gold in Cape Town to be put on board any warships you may send.... I feel however that I should not be discharging my responsibilities to the people of the British Empire if, without the slightest indication of how our fate was to be settled in Washington, I were to part with this last reserve, from which alone we might buy a few months' food."

Churchill ended his letter: "Whatever happens we shall certainly not give in, and I believe we can save ourselves and our own national interests for the time being. But you will not, I am sure, mind my saying that if you are not able to stand by us in all measures apart from war, we cannot guarantee to beat the Nazi tyranny and gain you the time you require for your rearmament. You may be absolutely sure that whatever you do or do not feel able to do, we shall go on to the utmost limit of our resources and strength. But I gravely fear that that strength unaided will not be sufficient to produce a world result of a satisfactory and lasting character."

The high point was the visit to Britain ten days later of Roosevelt's emissary Harry Hopkins, a visit that was the catalyst for the Lend Lease Bill. On the afternoon of 10 January 1941 Churchill told Hopkins that the text of the Lend-Lease Bill, which he had read that morning, "had made him feel that a new world had come into being".

"Whatever happens we shall certainly not give in, and I believe we can save ourselves and our own national interests for the time being. But you will not, I am sure, mind my saying that if you are not able to stand by us in all measures apart from war, we cannot guarantee to beat the Nazi tyranny and gain you the time you require for your rearmament..."

Churchill in letter to President Roosevelt, December 1940

Churchill and bombing in the Second World War

By Richard Overy

War, morality and politics. There has been much debate recently about the place played by Winston Churchill in the bombing of Germany during the Second World War. The German historian Jörg Friedrich in his book *Der Brand* suggested that Churchill was the key political figure driving the bombing campaign and hinted that his enthusiasm for "exterminating" attacks justified the view that Churchill was a war criminal. The argument that Churchill was the real decision-maker on the question of destroying German cities and killing half-a-million people has become part of the arsenal of Churchill critics, including the controversial American politician and author, Patrick Buchanan.



Richard Overy is a Professor in History at the University of Exeter. His research interests include the history of the Hitler and Stalin dictatorships, the Second World War, air power in the twentieth century and German history from c.1900. Overy has published extensively on these topics over the last thirty years. In 2004, he was awarded the Wolfson History Prize for The Dictators: Hitler's Germany; Stalin's Russia (Allen Lane, 2004).

The decision taken by his cabinet on 13 May to begin attacks on Germany worried Churchill not because of the possible moral implications of risking civilian deaths – he thought that the Germans deserved retaliation because of "the many atrocities already committed" by their forces – but because of the possible political implications of angering American opinion and alienating the French ally.

His final justification for approving the operations against Germany also had a strongly political character: that bombing would make the German people anxious, would warn Italy to stay out of the war and might reassure the French of Britain's determination to continue to assist them. This view of bombing as something which might affect political circumstances coloured Churchill's perception of the campaign right down to the attack on Dresden in February 1945 which stemmed from his impatient demand that the RAF do something to satisfy Soviet expectations.

In truth, Churchill had a very limited understanding of air power. His few direct interventions were often coloured by a quite exaggerated belief in what was possible. In the spring of 1941, for example, he wanted the RAF to prepare for a possible air "banquet", as he called it, bringing together every aircraft they could find, even from the training schools, to

launch a massive attack with thousands of planes. This he ordered on the basis of very flimsy intelligence from a secret source in Switzerland that the Germans were planning to do the same. He soon tired of the bombing campaign in 1941 because it failed to live up to his expectations of rapid or decisive outcome, a view that owed more to H. G. Wells than it did to sound military doctrine. In October 1941 he told the RAF chief-of-staff that the effects of bombing had been greatly exaggerated and for the rest of the

war his interest in bombing as a potential war-winning weapon evaporated away.

The one intervention Churchill did make in the conduct of air strategy did in fact have momentous consequences for the German people, who suffered more than half-a-million deaths and the destruction of more than 50 per cent of the main urban areas. In July 1941, keen

to help the failing Soviet war effort following the German assault in June, Churchill threw his political weight behind a proposal from his chief scientific adviser and friend Frederick Lindemann (Lord Cherwell). Lindemann was strongly in favour of city attacks with the purpose of "de-housing" German workers and Churchill, already deeply angered by the destruction of British cities in the Blitz, told a meeting of the War Cabinet Defence Committee on 21 July 1941 that he favoured the heaviest possible scale of bombing of German cities. This became the centrepiece of Bomber Command operational directives for the rest of the war and predated the arrival of Air Marshal Harris by more than six months.

Thereafter Churchill left the bombing campaign to take its own course. Other members of his government were much more openly enthusiastic about bombing and strongly resistant to changing the city-bombing strategy, particularly Churchill's deputy and future Labour prime minister, Clement Attlee. Churchill seems to have had little sense of the moral dimension of attacks on civilian communities or of his own responsibility in encouraging the choice of an area bombing strategy.

The case of the bombing of Dresden exposes the extent to which Churchill had cut himself off from the reality. Although he personally pressed the RAF to bomb the cities of eastern Germany, he reacted with indignation to the incineration of Dresden. He asked the Air Ministry to abandon terror bombing and asked the rhetorical question "Are we beasts?"

The question of Churchill's relationship with bombing is a complex one. He has been credited with launching the first independent bombing attacks when as First Lord of the Admiralty in 1914 he authorised the Royal Naval Air Service to undertake long-distance attacks against the German zeppelin sheds in southern Germany. He was a robust defender of an independent air force in 1919 when the navy and army hoped to stifle the recently-formed Royal Air Force and set up air arms of their own.

In the 1930s he was a strong advocate of rearmament in the air, though he was well aware of the potential horrors of unrestricted air warfare. The decision to launch bombing attacks on German soil taken during the Battle of France in 1940 was made by Churchill's cabinet just a few days after he had become prime minister. In July 1940, with France defeated, Churchill famously told the Minister of Aircraft production, his friend Lord Beaverbrook, that only "an absolutely devastating, exterminating attack" on the German homeland could secure victory.

Churchill's view of bombing was essentially a politician's view. What he wanted from bombing was what is now called a "political dividend", in this case the possible overthrow of the Hitler regime by a German population driven to revolt by the impact of bombing. He was also very aware of the political dimensions of bombing.

"What Churchill wanted from bombing was what is now called a 'political dividend', in this case the possible overthrow of the Hitler regime by a German population driven to revolt by the impact of bombing."



The receiving end. Churchill wearing a helmet during an air raid warning, London 1940.

Churchill and bombing in the Second World War (cont.)

By Richard Overy

Yet in 1950, when his assistants were trying to draft this part of his six-volume history of the war, Churchill claimed to remember nothing about Dresden and thought the Americans had been responsible. There is certainly nothing in Churchill's history to suggest that bombing had been a mistake or a moral lapse on the part of the British war effort, though he did warn Harris in 1946 not to write anything in his despatch on the campaign to suggest that the RAF had done anything other than bomb according to strict military guidelines. His detailed account of the atomic attacks on Japan again show that he was capable of extreme moral relativism when it came to the question of winning the war.

What is to be made of Churchill's place in the bombing campaign? There can be little doubt that without his initial support the campaign might never have developed at all. His view of the political consequences of bombing governed his attitude to its feasibility and morality. The shift to city-bombing which he encouraged in the summer of 1941 came at the same time as key speeches to the British public about their resilience during the Blitz and the possible need to prepare for a second winter of bombing in 1941/42. Bombing was important for British public opinion as well as for any possible effect on German morale.

No doubt Churchill could have stopped the

bombing of cities long before the end of the war but it seems that he allowed the campaign to continue by default, not very confident that it would achieve anything decisive but too hostile to the German menace to think hard about its moral implications or to abandon a form of attack that showed Britain's continued war-willingness. The end for Churchill of destroying Hitler's tyranny justified the means. This view of the morally expedient character of democratic warfare, rooted in the hope of a sure political dividend whatever the cost to the enemy country, has continued uninterrupted to the present day and the bombing of Belgrade, Baghdad and Kabul.

Churchill and the Irish Question

By Robert McNamara

Winston Churchill had an ambiguous relationship with Ireland. Following his father, Randolph, who had helped forge the alliance of Irish, particularly Ulster, Unionism, with British Conservatism, Churchill was initially unionist in inclination. After he joined the Liberals in 1904, he became converted to Home Rule around 1908 - though whether this was for electoral and political calculation is a matter of debate. Like so many of his new found enthusiasms, Churchill's rhetoric during the Home Rule crisis of 1912-14 was often more extreme than his private views and he was one of the earliest Liberals



Robert McNamara is a Lecturer in International History at the University of Ulster. He has published extensively on Anglo-Irish politics and British decolonisation and is the author of *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East, 1952-1977* (Routledge, 2003).

not responsible, as is sometimes claimed, for the introduction of ex-British soldiers, the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries, who rapidly developed a reputation for brutality. Churchill's support for the most draconian of measures was motivated as ever, by his determination to win first, to then negotiate from a position of strength.

Indeed by mid 1921, he appears to have believed this position had been reached and he was an advocate of the truce of July 1921. An offer of dominion status, something far in advance of Home Rule, but still substantially less than what many, particularly those in the *doctrinaire* wing of Sinn Fein wanted, was soon presented to Eamon de Valera. While he rebuffed the offer, he sent a negotiating team to London, led by Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins, the most effective Irish military leader. Under great pressure from a strong British negotiating team, including Lloyd George and Churchill, Collins and Griffith finally agreed a treaty, which kept a now partitioned Ireland as a dominion within in the British Empire.

De Valera rejected the compromise and there was a split in the Sinn Fein movement and IRA though the Treaty was ratified by the Dáil, the Irish parliament. De Valera was forced to resign as President and Collins assumed leadership of a provisional government, which faced increasing opposition from much of the IRA. Collins and Churchill, according to the latter's account, had bonded during the treaty negotiations but there were furious disputes between them over the proposed Irish constitution and the failure of Collins to crack down on anti-Treaty activities. By June 1922, Churchill was contemplating reoccupation of Ireland as the anti-Treaty side seemed out of control - a fact apparently confirmed by the assassination of Field Marshall Henry Wilson in London by IRA men. However, strengthened

by an overwhelming electoral victory in June 1922 for Irish parties that were pro-Treaty and a growing frustration with Anti-Treaty provocations, Collins and his colleagues decided of their own accord to move against the opposition. Churchill lavished weaponry on the Provisional government, which allowed it to prevail over its opponents though the cost was immense - some 1,200 dead including Collins. De Valera, who sided with the anti-Treaty side, was viewed by Churchill as the villain of the civil war.

De Valera's return to power in 1932 coincided with Churchill's wilderness years and his rightward drift on all matters imperial. He was one of the few parliamentary opponents of the Anglo-Irish agreement of 1938, which handed back Britain's military rights in Ireland, including three naval bases. This made possible Irish neutrality under de Valera during the Second World War, something which Churchill had great difficulty in accepting. His victory speech on 13 May 1945 contained a couple of paragraphs bitterly attacking Irish neutrality. It was partly motivated by de Valera's bizarre visit of 2 May to the German legation expressing condolences on the death of Hitler.

However, the speech was a misjudgement as de Valera was able to turn the tables on Churchill with a reply of considerable dignity that emphasised the suffering of the Irish under British rule. Churchill's speech, which essentially dismissed the right of Ireland to be neutral, has probably distorted the views of many Irish people on Churchill. Eamon de Valera reflected this in the comments he made on Churchill's death in 1965. He noted that "*we in Ireland had to regard Sir Winston over a long period as a dangerous adversary*". It should come as little surprise that there are no memorials to Winston Churchill in the Republic of Ireland.

"Churchill's victory speech on 13 May 1945 contained a couple of paragraphs bitterly attacking Irish neutrality."

Extraordinary rendition: how the Americans kidnapped Churchill

By Richard Toye

Few people realise that the Bush administration's programme of "extraordinary rendition" – the kidnap and forcible transfer of individuals from one state to another – was launched before the events of 9/11 began the so-called War on Terror.



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Its first victim, although high-profile, was not a terrorist mastermind, but former British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill – or rather, a bust of him by the eminent sculptor Sir Jacob Epstein. In July 2001 President Bush paraded the captive in front of the cameras at the White House, having obtained him on loan from the British government to display in the Oval Office. (Some dispute the legality of the loan, claiming that the UK Government Art Collection does not have the authority to lend items to foreign governments.) There was, however, no orange jumpsuit in sight. The purpose was not to humiliate the late premier or to secure intelligence from him, but to secure his symbolic posthumous endorsement for the Bush style of doing this. The President told the press: "People said, why would you be interested in having the bust of an Englishman in your Oval Office. And the answer is because he was one of the great leaders in the 20th century. [...] He knew what he believed. And he really kind of went after it in a way that seemed like a Texan to me [...] He charged ahead, and the world is better for it."

Although Churchill's capture pre-dated the attacks on the World Trade Center, he turned out to be a valuable presence thereafter. "We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail", Bush told a joint session of Congress on 20 September that year, in what seemed like a conscious echo of Churchill's famed World War II rhetoric. In the run-up to the invasion of Iraq the exploitation of Churchill's memory reached a new intensity. In August 2002 US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld drew a comparison between the alleged threat posed by

Saddam Hussein and the situation in the 1930s:

"during that period, the voices of concern about what Adolf Hitler was doing were very few. [...] And as he - they occupied one country after another country, it wasn't till each country was attacked that they stopped and said, 'Well, maybe Winston Churchill was right.' Maybe that lone voice expressing concern about what was taking place was the right voice."

It was a stretch to suggest that he and Bush – with the resources of government at their command – held an equivalent position to Churchill, who had battled against the British government's appeasement policy from the backbenches of the House

of Commons. And although it is true that he was perceived by many of his contemporaries as a warmonger, Churchill never did advocate a pre-emptive strike against the Nazi regime. In fact, he always believed that rearmament combined with a firm foreign policy stance by Britain could have helped avert what he called "the unnecessary war". Historical complexity, however, did not serve Rumsfeld's purpose. This, of course, was to suggest that whereas those who supported an attack on Iraq were, like Churchill, determined and unwavering, their opponents were vacillating and weak.

Once the Iraq war was over, and as the occupation proved problematic, Bush administration rhetoric increasingly

stressed not only Churchill's foresight but also his steadfastness. Now, Churchill's famous "Iron Curtain" speech – which helped inaugurate the Cold war – was used as a point of reference. "When World War II ended, Winston Churchill immediately understood that the victory was incomplete", Bush argued in February 2004. He further explained:

"in some ways, our current struggles or challenges are similar to those Churchill knew. The outcome of the war on terror depends on our ability to see danger and to answer it with strength and purpose. One by one, we are finding and dealing with the terrorists, drawing tight what Winston Churchill called a 'closing net of doom.'"

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In the run-up to that year's election, Vice-President Cheney rammed the point home by speaking at Westminster College, Missouri, where Churchill's original 1946 speech had been given. He contrasted Bush's supposedly Churchill-like confidence with Democrat contender John Kerry's "inconsistencies and changing rationales".

Some scholars were prepared to lend their weight to the Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld interpretation of history. Sir Martin Gilbert, Churchill's official biographer, argued that Bush and his British counterpart Tony Blair might well, "with the passage of time and the opening of the archives, join the ranks of Roosevelt and Churchill". Perhaps unsurprisingly, though, Republican politicians referred to the Democratic FDR far less often than they did the Tony Churchill.

The British government did not disapprove of the American kidnap of one of its citizens. In fact – as the loan of the bust makes clear – they actively connived in it, making Churchill a repeated theme of diplomatic gifts, to which they gave considerable thought and worry. Shortly before the invasion of Iraq, for example, Blair gave Bush a "Churchill Presentation Box", which included a cigar and a book of quotations.



A modern lend-lease agreement? President George W. Bush and the bust of Churchill, now returned to its original home in London.

Extraordinary rendition (cont.)

By Richard Toye

Why did the British make these efforts? In his memoirs, the former UK ambassador to Washington Christopher Meyer explained that there was an existing store of goodwill towards the British from the Americans. Meyer sensed this at various times, including "when the memory of Winston Churchill was invoked, which was often, including in the White House". In other words, the use of Churchillian imagery was a way for the Blair government to strengthen its ties with the US.

Optimists presented the signs of American goodwill as evidence of the enduring nature of the Anglo-US "special relationship"; critics saw them merely as the tokens that a client state received from its political masters. It should also be noted that British ministers did their best to exploit Churchill's memory in front of domestic audiences too, although they tended to be slightly more subtle in their technique than Bush was. In 2002 one journalist wrote memorably of how Blair had puffed "on a large invisible cigar" during a Commons debate in which he argued that dictators would only respond to diplomacy when it was backed by the threat of force.

Such attempts to make use of history must themselves be put in historical context. Churchill himself had started the process of manipulating wartime memories almost before the war was over. After Churchill returned to power in 1951 (having been defeated at the general election six years earlier) he did his best to compensate for his country's reduced power status by playing on the past. "Winston is trying to relive the days of World War II", President Eisenhower wrote in his diary. "Much as I hold Winston in my personal affection and much as I admire him for his past accomplishments and leadership, I wish that he would turn over leadership of the Conservative Party to younger men".

Once Churchill was safely retired, and finally elevated to the pantheon, it became easier for American (and British) politicians to invoke him in their own interests. To some extent, it was easier for Americans to lay claim to Churchill's legacy than to that of FDR, whose domestic achievements remained politically controversial. It was John F. Kennedy who in 1963 signed the bill conferring honorary

US citizenship upon him. As the historian John Ramsden has observed, Kennedy's successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, was soon referring to Churchill "routinely and without qualification as 'the greatest of all American citizens.'" Ramsden also notes that this was part of Johnson's strategy to obtain British and Australian involvement in the Vietnam War. As the Washington correspondent of *The Times* concluded in 1968: "President Johnson is determined to follow in the footsteps of Churchill and Roosevelt, or *what he sees as their footsteps*" (emphasis added).

By the 1980s, the habit of invoking Churchill had become so deeply ingrained that at a banquet for Margaret Thatcher, about the impossibility of making a speech without referring to him. Thatcher herself spoke about Churchill in ways that prefigured the treatment given to him by George W. Bush: "He was a giant. He saw clearly. He warned clearly. He did what had to be done." Like Bush, and like him without saying so, she was clearly using Churchill's reputation in order to burnish her own. The context, in that instance, was the Cold War. In 1984, however, she also hailed Churchill a visionary of European integration, a cause she was espousing at the time.

This shows that Churchill's memory could be put to more than one use; and in fact the mantle of Churchill has always been heavily contested. It was even sought by

Saddam Hussein who, prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, promised to "fight them [the coalition forces] on the streets, from the rooftops, from house to house. We will never surrender". Saddam was echoing both Churchill in 1940 and Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser during the Suez crisis of 1956. More recently Al Gore has summoned up Churchill's spirit in the battle against climate change.

After he took office this year, President Obama, at the same time as he sought to close the Guantanamo Bay detention camp, liberated the kidnapped Churchill from his White House imprisonment. He

"In 2002 one journalist wrote memorably of how Blair had puffed "on a large invisible cigar" during a Commons debate in which he argued that dictators would only respond to diplomacy when it was backed by the threat of force."

declined a British offer to extend the loan of the bust for another four years. According to news reports, the move caused a degree of consternation in the British Foreign Office, and there has been some speculation that Obama was influenced by his Kenyan background. (His father and grandfather were both interned briefly by the British during the Mau Mau rebellion of the

1950s, which began during Churchill's final term as Prime Minister.) This may have been so; but his decision was also a clear repudiation of the symbolism of the Bush era.

However, by the time that he had been in office one hundred days, Obama was himself invoking Churchill in support of his own views: "Churchill said, we don't torture - when the entire British -

all of the British people were being subjected to unimaginable risk and threat." It seems, then, that although the Epstein bust is now back on home soil, the American contest over Churchill's legacy is set to continue. At the time of writing, lawyers are still debating whether Churchill's eight years in the company of George Bush constituted illegal inhumane treatment.

Suggested further reading:

- Ramsden, J. (2002) *Man of the Century: Winston Churchill and his legend since 1945* (London: HarperCollins).
- Toye, R. (2008) 'The Churchill Syndrome: reputational entrepreneurship and the rhetoric of foreign policy since 1945', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 10, 3: 364-78.



The big three. The origins of Britain's aspirations for a post-war global role: Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin at the Yalta summit, February 1945.

Churchill and Intelligence: below the radar

By Gill Bennett

Secret channels. Of all British twentieth century politicians and statesmen, Winston Spencer Churchill had the closest interest in, and longest involvement with secret intelligence. From the Boer War to the Second World War and beyond—more than fifty years—he sought out, consumed, valued and thoroughly enjoyed secret intelligence, and extolled its importance to those military and political authorities whom he served and, later directed.

There were occasions when his support or initiative changed permanently or profoundly the face and fortunes of Britain: the passage of the Official Secrets Act in 1911 when he was Home Secretary, for example; or his insistence as Prime Minister in 1940 that the codebreakers of Bletchley Park received the resources they needed. His influence could be decisive at key points: in 1922, for example, as Secretary of State for War, he argued successfully against attempts by the Geddes Committee to cut the budget of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS). ‘Though war no longer exists’, he wrote, ‘the situations all over the world are so complex that greater vigilance on the part of SIS is required than in 1914.’ His clear-sighted recognition that the end of hostilities did not mean the end of national peril was to be relearned by others after the Second World War, and indeed after the Cold War.

Churchill’s long ministerial career, beginning with the post of under secretary at the Colonial Office in 1905 (in a Liberal government) and ending when he relinquished the premiership of the Conservative government in 1955, provided him with almost uninterrupted access to official sources of secret intelligence. When, as Chancellor of the Exchequer in Baldwin’s 1924-29 government, he was initially denied access to intercepted communications, Churchill complained bitterly. In his so-called “wilderness” period, between 1929 and 1939, he may have been out of office



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but, as Professor David Stafford puts it, the wilderness was “a brilliantly illuminated one in which he enjoyed impressive sources of information”. Not only did he have a wide network of private informants, including serving officers, businessmen and overseas contacts, but he was also kept well informed from official sources. Much has been made of stories of officials and others passing government documents to Churchill covertly during the 1930s, but the record shows that ministers not only knew but approved of his being kept abreast of intelligence on, for example, German rearmament; his exclusion from office was a matter of politics.

Nevertheless, the fact that Churchill had spent the 1930s outside government meant that when he became prime minister in May 1940, he had few personal links with the intelligence agencies. The appointment of Major Desmond Morton, Director of Intelligence at the Ministry of Economic Warfare and a former member of the Secret Intelligence Service, as his personal liaison officer with the agencies reflected Churchill’s urgent desire to establish those links and harness all available secret intelligence resources to the war effort. There is no doubt that Churchill had a decisive and dynamic impact on the British intelligence establishment, from his well-known instruction to the newly-created Special Operations Executive in July 1940 to “set Europe ablaze” with sabotage and subversion, to the creation of the less well-known Security Executive, which dealt with censorship, monitoring of fascist and communist activity and Irish security, as well as the control of ports, protection of military stores and British businesses overseas that were important to the war effort, and other technical security issues that fell outside the

remit either of SIS or of the Security Service (MI5).

Churchill was interested in all aspects of the intelligence spectrum, from aerial reconnaissance to the Double Cross system of “turning” German agents, and was always willing to encourage intelligence gathering activities that might bring advantage over the enemy. Sometimes this worked out badly, dissipating the central intelligence effort and impeding command and control on the ground. There were those, particularly in the military, who thought the prime minister capricious and too reliant on “irregular” operations. Most of these

critics, however, were not admitted to the charmed circle of ULTRA, the decrypted enemy messages from Bletchley Park whose existence and content Churchill guarded closely and regarded, rightly, as a key weapon in the Allied arsenal. Though ULTRA was only one component of the wartime intelligence picture, it was increasingly critical to strategic decision-making and deserved the encouragement, resources and protection that Churchill made sure were available.

Why was Churchill so interested in intelligence? Certainly he had a lifelong admiration for courage, daring and initiative, and was always attracted by the prospect of using unorthodox methods and machinery to achieve the desired aim (not least if they promised quick or dramatic results). He also valued information, particularly if it supported his own ideas and plans, and enjoyed receiving it when others did not. Churchill was a man who attracted myth and mystery—indeed, he enjoyed creating an impression of secrecy and behind-the-scenes influence in his political life and, especially, in his writings.

Many tales have been told by those who claim to have worked for Churchill in a range of secret and, often, incredible activities. While there may be some truth in a minority of these tales, few bear close scrutiny. It would be wrong to overestimate Churchill’s interest in intelligence for its own sake. As a war leader, certainly, he was focused solely upon victory. Secret intelligence was, in Churchill’s mind, a tool for use in achieving that aim. He had no time for the cloak and the dagger unless they concealed a deadly and hidden weapon.

“Churchill’s long ministerial career [...] provided him with almost uninterrupted access to official sources of secret intelligence..”



Man of action. Winston Churchill (in the centre), then the Home Secretary, at the so-called Siege of Sidney Street, 3 January 1911. Churchill’s personal presence at the scene of battle against Latvian burglars at London’s East End was controversial - and unconventional to say the least.

Churchill the quotable

By Kristin M. Haugevik and Atle L. Wold

A master of words. Few British statesmen are quoted as often as Winston Churchill. Politicians from both sides of the British political spectrum turn to Churchill for rhetorical inspiration, or they borrow a phrase or an extract to season and strengthen their own political message. Similarly, journalists and scholars readily refer to extracts and catchwords from Churchill's speeches to illustrate or support their arguments.

There is little doubt that Churchill had strong verbal skills. In one of his early autobiographies, he noted the value of studying English and hence getting "into my bones the essential structure of the ordinary British sentence, which is a noble thing". However, Churchill was not only an eloquent public speaker, he was also a productive writer. In addition to his many memorable political speeches and public statements, he published a long list of historical and biographical books; as well as one fictional novel. Among his best-known historical publications are the six volumes on *The Second World War* (1948-1954) and the four volumes presenting the history of Britain and its former colonies, entitled *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples* (1956-1958). The former largely contributed to his winning of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1953, "for his mastery of historical and biographical description as well as for brilliant oratory in defending exalted human values".

Many of the most memorable Churchill quotations originate in speeches made during his first period as Prime Minister, from 1940 to 1945. Most of these were saturated by the ongoing world war. An obvious example is his first speech to the House of Commons after he took office, where he declared that he had nothing to offer the House or the members of his government "but blood, toil, tears, and sweat". It was also in a House of Commons speech that he called for action stating "Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, 'This was their finest hour.'" A speech in August 1940 produced another unforgettable quote, when Churchill praised the British Royal Air Force for its efforts in the Battle of Britain, observing that "never in the field



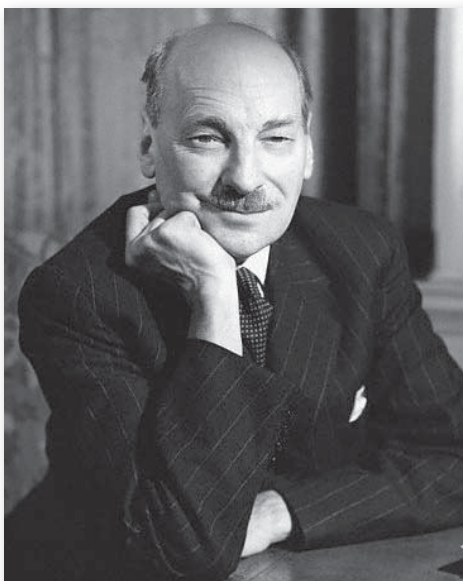
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of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few".

After the war, Churchill became Leader of the Opposition (between 1946 and 1951). It was from this position that he in 1946 came up with his legendary "Iron Curtain" reference: "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an iron curtain has descended across the Continent". In the same speech - entitled "The Sinews of Peace" - he introduced the idea of a "special relationship" between Britain and the United States for the first time. "Neither the sure prevention of war, nor the continuous rise of world organization," he noted, "will be gained without what I have called the fraternal association of the English-speaking peoples. This means a special relationship between the British Commonwealth and Empire and the United States". Churchill's last major speech to the House of Commons in 1955 also ended in a well-known citation: "The day may dawn when fair play, love for one's fellow-men, respect for justice and freedom, will enable tormented generations to march forth serene and triumphant from the hideous epoch in which we have to dwell. Meanwhile, never flinch, never weary, never despair."

Known for his well-formulated political statements, Churchill also had a less politically correct side. Occasionally, this would emerge as off-the-cuff remarks made following one of his grand pieces of oratory. When sitting down after his famous "we shall fight on the beaches"-speech in 1940, for example, Churchill is said to have commented drily to the MP sitting next to



Clement Attlee, Labour leader, Prime Minister (1945-51) and Churchill's domestic rival, was famously referred to by the latter as "a sheep in a sheep's clothing".

him: "and we'll fight them with the butt-ends of broken beer bottles because that's bloody well all we've got!", his reference, of course, being to Dunkirk, and the fact that most of the heavy equipment of the British Expeditionary Force had to be left behind during the frantic evacuation of the troops. Similarly, he remarked gloomily at one point in 1941 that "if we win, nobody will care. If we lose, there will be nobody to care".

Churchill's sharp wit would often be directed at his political opponents, of which the most famous are the comments he made at the expense of the Labour leader Clement Attlee (whom Churchill actually held in high regard): Attlee, Churchill thought, could be described as "a sheep in a sheep's clothing", and "a modest

"In a statement to his personal secretary in 1941, Churchill observed: 'If Hitler invaded Hell, I would make at least a favourable reference to the devil in the House of Commons'..."

man who has a great deal to be modest about". Moreover, when Attlee became prime minister in 1945, Churchill is supposed to have said that "an empty taxi arrived at no. 10 Downing Street today, and Mr. Attlee got out", though he fiercely denied having made this comment. No gentle feelings were spared for Charles de Gaulle, however, whom Churchill thought: "looks like a female

llama who has just been surprised in her bath".

Churchill's opinion of Hitler was - not surprisingly - extremely low. In a statement to his personal secretary in 1941, he observed: "If Hitler invaded Hell, I would make at least a favourable reference to the devil in the House of Commons".

Sometimes, Churchill got as good as he gave (which he probably rather liked). In one of his many exchanges with Nancy Astor - the first woman MP - in the House of Commons, he told her that she was an undesirable alien who should go back home - Churchill was at first against the idea of female MPs. Astor, however, replied that "as for my Right Honourable Friend, he himself is half alien and wholly undesirable". Churchill was, of course, half American.

Finally, although Churchill is primarily remembered for his effort during the Second World War, he had, of course, had a very long and chequered political career before that. This short exchange from 1900 indicates that his wit was well in place at this early stage of his political career: when doing a spot of canvassing, Churchill was met with the comment: "Vote for you? Why, I'd rather vote for the Devil!" "I understand", Churchill replied. "But in case your friend is not running, may I count on your support?"

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John Hutton is Member of Parliament for Barrow and Furness. Between 2005 and 2009 he was Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (2005-07), Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (2007-08) and Defence (2008-09). He resigned from Gordon Brown's Government on 5 June 2009.

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