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## Churchill: Forging an Alliance for Freedom

*Allen Packwood*

On October 16, 1938, Winston Churchill broadcast directly to the United States. This is a key passage from Churchill's own notes for that broadcast. It is set out in what his office called "psalm form"—the style used by Churchill for all his speech notes—with the verse-like structure informing the delivery and providing the emphasis.

The speech is an impassioned appeal for greater American involvement in Europe:

We must arm. Britain must arm. America must arm.... But arms...are not sufficient by themselves. We must add to them the power of ideas. People say we ought not to allow ourselves to be drawn into a theoretical antagonism between Nazidom and democracy; but the antagonism is here now. It is the very conflict of spiritual and moral ideas which gives the free countries a great part of their strength.<sup>1</sup>

This is the Churchill that everybody recognizes. The great orator. The champion of democracy in the face of fascism.

Let me take you back to that point. Europe seems close to war. Hitler's latest territorial demand for the immediate transfer of the German-speaking Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia has led to a tense period of international diplomacy, culminating in a four-power summit meeting between Britain, Germany, France, and Italy in Munich at the end of September. The Czechs have no voice. The Sudetenland is duly annexed.

### Talking Points

- Despite seeming inconsistencies, Churchill maintained a unified political philosophy and a coherent worldview throughout his long career.
- Churchill's pro-American sentiment was honed during World War I; came to fruition during his wartime correspondence with President Franklin D. Roosevelt; and was furthered by his extensive travels throughout the U.S.
- One of Churchill's remarkable legacies was his ability to bridge the gap between the United States, Britain, and greater Europe.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:  
[www.heritage.org/research/politicalphilosophy/hl835.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/research/politicalphilosophy/hl835.cfm)

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Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain returns to London to a rapturous welcome from the relieved British public. Embarking triumphantly from his airplane at Heston airfield, he is pictured waving a piece of paper signed by himself and Chancellor Hitler, “symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again,” and promising peace “for our time.”

### Historical Perspective

Churchill has no government position. He speaks out powerfully against the Munich agreement. Firstly in the British Parliament on October 5, where he criticizes the whole policy of appeasement:

...[W]e have passed an awful milestone in our history, when the whole equilibrium of Europe has been deranged, and that the terrible words have for the time being pronounced against the Western democracies: “Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting.” And do not suppose that this is the end. This is only the beginning of the reckoning.<sup>2</sup>

He then makes his broadcast directly to the United States, and there is no doubt that this particular speech was widely heard on this side of the Atlantic. Many of the letters Churchill received from American listeners survive among his papers. They are revealing and tell us something about how Churchill, Britain, and Munich were seen in the United States. Some are highly supportive. A gentleman in Ohio wrote, “...[A]s Americans, and of course, real lovers of true democracy, we know American frontiers are at the Rhine and our battlefield wherever and whenever democracy is challenged and imperilled.” A similar vein from another gentleman in Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia: “Certainly the time has come when the democracies of the world must hang together or there is a grave danger they may hang separately.”

But others were more critical, blaming the British and their government for the mess in which they

now found themselves. From Wayland, Massachusetts, “Why ask America’s help, however, while the English retain in power a government that set in motion the whole damnable plot, that scuttled the ship of its friends?” And from Philadelphia:

Why should we trust a [British] government who time after time expresses pious platitudes and then walks out on democracies? ...American public opinion can and will change from an isolationist view to an active participation in the fight for freedom only when and if it is clearly demonstrated to us that Great Britain and France are willing and wholeheartedly, in that fight.

Then there is the woman from Jacksonville, Florida, who will not forgive the Abdication Crisis—the British refusal to countenance a Royal marriage to an American woman—and the man from New York who sees hypocrisy in British and French arms sales to Hitler and argues that, “since England and France have consistently polluted their bed, may the rest of the world see to it that they alone sleep on it!”<sup>3</sup>

These are just few examples. There does seem to have been some genuine respect and admiration for Churchill, and Anthony Eden is also often mentioned in a positive light, but it is clear—even from this small and unrepresentative sample—that there was no real consensus of support for Britain.

Churchill must have been only too aware that he faced an uphill task. In the October 16 speech he argues that America will not be able to remain isolated forever. He describes his audience as “increasingly involved spectators” and states, “We are left in no doubt where American conviction and sympathies lie; but will you wait until British freedom and independence have succumbed, and then take up the cause when it is three-quarters ruined, yourselves alone?”<sup>4</sup> It was a theme to which he would return again and again in speeches, articles, letters, and telegrams during the course of the next three

1. Extract from broadcast to the United States, October 16, 1938, Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill Papers, CHAR 9/132.

2. Speech by Winston Churchill, House of Commons, October 5, 1938, Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill Papers, CHAR 9/130.

3. Letters to Churchill in the aftermath of his radio broadcast, October 16–17, 1938, Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill Papers, CHAR 2/608B/132-133, 137-140, 142, 145, 146, 179.

4. Extract from broadcast to the United States, October 16, 1938, Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill Papers, CHAR 9/132.

years as he attempted to forge an alliance with the United States.

The title of this talk is “Forging an Alliance for Freedom.” This is an enormous subject, and I want to focus on the following questions. What did Churchill mean by freedom? Can we identify a coherent political philosophy and worldview? If we can, to what extent was this shaped by Churchill’s long personal relationship with the United States, and to what extent did it shape his practical actions after 1940?

### A Man of Many Faces

The problem, of course, is where to begin. Here is a man who was hero of both the Boer War and the Cold War; a politician who entered the British Parliament in 1900 at age 25 and left in 1964 at age 89; a statesman who took his first seat in the British Cabinet in 1908 and who held many of the major offices of state before becoming Prime Minister in 1940 at the age of 65; a soldier; a writer; a painter. A man who always provoked strong responses in those who met him.

Beatrice Webb, the famous social reformer, upon meeting Churchill early in his career in 1903, described him as

a self conscious and bumptious person with a certain personal magnetism, restless, shallow in knowledge, reactionary in opinions, but with courage and originality—more the American speculator in type than the English aristocrat.

The politician “Rab” Butler went slightly further: “He is a half-breed American and the greatest political adventurer of modern times.”

In the Library of Congress exhibition, you will see Theodore Roosevelt’s observation on Churchill and his father: “I can’t help feeling about both of them that the older one was a rather cheap character, and that the younger one is a rather cheap character.”

Of course, these can be offset against remarks like those of the British Labour Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, who described Churchill as “The greatest man any of us have known.”

It is not surprising that the official biography—

started by Winston’s son, Randolph Churchill, but taken up and completed by Sir Martin Gilbert—runs to eight volumes, with companion volumes still in production. There is no shortage of raw material about Churchill. His own papers run to some twenty-five hundred boxes—an estimated one million pieces of paper.

In part, this is because Churchill himself was only too aware of the importance of archives. You only have to look at his multi-volume histories of the First and Second World Wars to see how he uses the documents to tell his story. Of course, he uses them selectively. This, after all, is the man who joked in the House of Commons in 1948 that, “For my part, I consider that it will be found much better by all Parties to leave the past to history, especially as I propose to write that history myself.”<sup>5</sup>

But that stresses the need for keeping this material. The archives are the evidence against which subsequent interpretations of events, including Churchill’s, can be tested. And there are no shortages of subsequent interpretations!

It is certainly true that when you first look at Churchill’s career, there appear many apparent contradictions.

- Here is the British aristocrat, the grandson of the Duke of Marlborough, who joined a radical Liberal government and supported Lloyd George’s Peoples Budget of 1909: a budget that increased taxation of the landed classes and was used to break the power of the House of Lords.
- Here is the politician who changed his party twice. Starting life as a Conservative, crossing the floor to join the Liberal Party in 1904, and re-crossing it to return to the Conservative fold 20 years later in 1924. A rare feat, which led him to remark, “Anyone can rat, but it takes a certain ingenuity to re-rat.”
- Here is the great defender of democratic values, who, as Home Secretary in 1910–11, refused to support calls for female suffrage and who spent many hours on the campaign trail being heckled by suffragettes.
- Here is the champion of international freedom, co-author of the Atlantic Charter, who also

5. House of Commons, January 23, 1948, cited in *The Wisdom of Winston Churchill*, ed. F. B. Czarnomski (London, 1956).

remained the most passionate supporter of Empire: His political isolation in the early 1930s stemmed partly from his opposition to greater Indian self-government.

- Here is the spokesman for the closer union of the English-Speaking Peoples who is also remembered as a leading advocate of greater European union. On 5 March 1946, during his famous “Iron Curtain” speech, Churchill talked at length about the “special relationship between the British Commonwealth and Empire and the United States,” and went as far as to suggest that:

Eventually there may come—I feel eventually there will come—the principle of common citizenship, but that we may be content to leave to destiny, whose outstretched arm many of us can already clearly see.<sup>6</sup>

Yet just a few weeks later, speaking at The Hague in Holland, Churchill appeared to be promoting European union:

I say here as I said at Brussels last year that I see no reason why, under the guardianship of the world organisation, there should not ultimately arise the United States of Europe, both those of the East and those of the West, which will unify this continent in a manner never known since the fall of the Roman Empire.<sup>7</sup>

Such statements may sound contradictory. It seems strange that Churchill was Chairman of the English-Speaking Union in the 1920s and lent his name to the Movement for a United States of Europe in the 1940s. But that is because we look at these issues with a modern mind-set: the view that Anglo-American union and British participation in greater European Union are mutually exclusive. To Churchill they were not, and to understand why we need to look at the bigger picture.

In a political life as long as Churchill's, it is not surprising that there may appear to be contradictions. However, I maintain that it is possible to identify a core political philosophy that broadly underpins his

whole career. Fortunately, it is a policy that Churchill articulated and which can be reconstructed from a number of his own articles and speeches.

### A Core Political Philosophy

On September 18, 1938, he published a popular article for the *British News of the World* entitled, “Parliamentary Democracy or The British Parliamentary Bulwark.” This article is being written against the backdrop of the unfolding Munich Crisis, and is a response to the spread of fascism and totalitarianism across Europe and an answer to those within Britain who had begun questioning the value of democratic government. He opens with the statement that:

The life and traditions of the British islanders have created parliamentary institutions which have spread in varying forms all over the world, and are still considered the best defence for the ordinary citizens and the best hope for social stability and economic well being.

He traces the evolution of parliamentary government in Britain and characterizes the message of the English people to the human race as:

Freedom of religion, freedom of thought, freedom of movement, freedom to choose or change employment: the inviolability even of the humblest home: the right and the power of the private citizen to appeal to impartial courts against the State and the Ministers of the day: freedom of speech and writing: freedom of the press: freedom of combination and agitation within the limits of long established laws: the right of regular opposition to the Government: the power to turn out a government and put another set of men in their places by lawful constitutional means: and finally for all citizens the sense of association with the state and some responsibility for its actions and conduct.<sup>8</sup>

It is noticeable that he does not include freedom to vote. Indeed, in the same article he goes on to question whether the extensions of the franchise have contributed to the rise of fascism, reflecting about “how melancholy it would be if, when everybody had the vote in England, all they did with it was to throw

6. Extract from speech at Fulton, Missouri, March 5, 1946, Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill Papers, CHUR 5/4.

7. Extract from speech at The Hague, May 9, 1946, Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill Papers, CHUR 5/5.

8. Extract from article, “Parliamentary Democracy,” September 18, 1938, Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill Papers, CHAR 8/616.

away the rights and liberties so painfully and nobly gained in three or four hundred years.”

To Churchill it is vital that parliamentary governments respond forcefully to threats to these liberties. They should not tolerate communism or Nazism, because both movements are fundamentally anti-democratic and can achieve their aims only through violence. If this means restricting the franchise or disqualifying parties from elections, then so be it. His conclusion is stark and prefigures his forthcoming broadcast to America:

What always strikes one in reading histories of the past and in surveying the degradation of so many great communities, is the failure of the sober, moderate, virtuous forces to act with vigour and, if need be, with violence against aggression.<sup>9</sup>

Here, I think we can identify some constants in Churchill's thought. He supported the British Empire, not just because it maintained British power and prestige, but because he saw it as part and parcel of the development of British rights and institutions, and as the means whereby these liberties could be extended across the globe.

He supported parliamentary democracy, but his was essentially a Victorian, paternalistic democracy in which the elected few ruled for the benefit of the mass. Hence, he promoted social reform, such as the introduction of labor exchanges and unemployment insurance, but resisted socialism and vigorously opposed trade unionism and industrial disturbances like the General Strike of 1926.

Above all, he held that hard-won rights and liberties could not be taken for granted and had to be defended by force. These beliefs led him to oppose communism from its inception, and he famously compared the arrival of Lenin in Russia to that of plague bacillus, but they also enabled him to identify and articulate the threat Nazism posed to the world order.

### Churchill and the U.S.

By the 1930s Churchill had also realized that fascism and communism could not be defeated without strong international alliances. He favored greater European cooperation within the League of

Nations, but he was also in no doubt of the importance of the United States.

Perhaps this is not surprising: After all, Churchill was himself the product of an Anglo-American union. His father, Lord Randolph Churchill, was very much the British aristocrat—the younger son of the Duke of Marlborough, educated at Eton, and moving in the highest social circles. Winston Churchill's mother, Jennie Jerome, was born in Brooklyn, New York, the daughter of the celebrated entrepreneur Leonard Jerome. In this sense, Churchill was the living embodiment of an Anglo-American union: a fact that he was able to exploit for his own humorous advantage. During his historic speech to the Joint Session of the United States Congress in December 1941, he famously remarked:

By the way, I cannot help reflecting that if my father had been an American and my mother British, instead of the other way round, I might have got here on my own.<sup>10</sup>

For this audience, and given the nature of the Library of Congress exhibit, it is perhaps worth going into some detail on the development of Churchill's personal relationship with the United States—a relationship which was to prove critical at the moment of crisis in 1940. Churchill first travelled to the United States in November 1895, en route to military adventure in Cuba. His first impressions of his mother's homeland make for interesting reading. His host, the distinguished lawyer and democrat Bourke Cockran, wined and dined his young charge, dazzling him with New York high society.

To his mother, Churchill wrote:

What an extraordinary people the Americans are! Their hospitality is a revelation to me and they make you feel at home and at ease in a way that I have never before experienced. On the other hand their press and their currency impress me very unfavourably.<sup>11</sup>

These themes were further expounded in a letter to his brother Jack:

But the essence of American journalism is vulgarity divested of truth. Their best

9. *Ibid.*

10. Extract from speech to Joint Session of Congress, December 26, 1941, Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill Papers, CHAR 9/153.

papers write for a class of snotty housemaids and footmen.... I think mind you that vulgarity is a sign of strength. A great, crude, strong young people are the Americans—like a boisterous healthy boy among enervated but well bred ladies and gentlemen.<sup>12</sup>

Yet Churchill returned to the United States on several occasions. In 1900, the 26-year-old capitalized on his newfound status as a hero of the Boer War and undertook a lecture tour of the Northeast. While the lecture tour was primarily a money-making exercise, it took Churchill to Philadelphia, New Haven, Washington, Baltimore, Boston, New Bedford, Springfield, Hartford, and Fall River. It also saw him introduced to some of the most prominent Americans of the day, including Vice President Theodore Roosevelt, the novelist Mark Twain, and his namesake and fellow author, the American Winston Churchill.

The decade leading up to 1914 saw Churchill immersed first in British, and then in European politics. He defected from the Conservatives to the Liberals and served in a succession of senior ministerial appointments. By the outbreak of the First World War, he was First Lord of the Admiralty and in charge of the largest fighting fleet in the world. Although he did not return to the United States in this period, Churchill's previous travels and personal contacts meant that he was well-informed about life on the other side of the Atlantic.

What happened next must have had a profound effect on Churchill's thinking. He was already an admirer of the United States, but the Great War of 1914–1918 highlighted a change in the balance of power between the old and new worlds: between Europe and North America.

Churchill was involved in the conflict from the outset. As a member of the British Cabinet, he fought hard to break the stalemate on the Western Front, sponsoring the development of the "land battleships" that would eventually evolve into the tank and advocating the opening of a second front against Turkey through the Dardanelles Straits. The failure to force the Dardanelles, and the disastrous Gallipoli

landings that followed, cost Churchill his job at the Admiralty and ultimately led him to resign from the government. For a few months in 1916, he took up a commission and commanded a battalion in the trenches. He was not there during a major offensive, but he did serve his time on the front line.

The United States entered the war in April 1917 after the German declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare. Writing his history *The World Crisis* in the 1920s, Churchill was in no doubt about the significance of the Congressional Resolution:

Of all the grand miscalculations of the German High Command none is more remarkable than their inability to comprehend the meaning of war with the American Union. It is perhaps the crowning example of the unwisdom of basing a war policy upon the computation of material factors alone. The war effort of 120,000,000 educated people, equipped with science, and possessed of the resources of an unattackable Continent, nay, of a New World, could not be measured by the number of drilled soldiers, of trained officers, of forged cannon, of ships of war they happened to have at their disposal. It betokens ignorance of the elemental forces resident in such a community to suppose that they could be permanently frustrated by a mechanical instrument called the U-Boat. How rash to balance the hostile exertions of the largest, if not the leading, civilized nation in the world against the chance that they would not arrive in time upon the field of battle!<sup>13</sup>

Back in the government as Minister of Munitions starting in July 1917, Churchill was well-placed to see the elemental forces of the United States war machine springing into action. Not only had the New World come to the rescue of the Old, but the war had actually destroyed the Old World while helping to stimulate the economy of the New.

This did not necessarily make for smooth Anglo-American relations. In the early 1920s there was a

11. Extract from letter to Lady Randolph Churchill, November 10, 1895, Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill Papers, CHAR 28/21.

12. Extract from letter to John Churchill, November 15, 1895, Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill Papers, CHAR 28/21.

13. Extract from *The World Crisis, 1916–18 Part I*, Winston S. Churchill (1927), pp. 225–226.

feeling in Britain that the United States was profiting from Britain's decline. Churchill remained a consistent friend of the United States, becoming Chairman of the English-Speaking Union in 1921. But he acknowledged in a private letter to Clementine that he found it "uphill work to make an enthusiastic speech about the United States at a time when so many hard things are said about us over there" (by which he means criticism of the British policy in Ireland) "and when they are wringing the last penny out of their unfortunate allies." And yet he felt closer friendship to be the only course for the future.

In 1924 Churchill rejoined the Conservative Party and, to his great surprise, found himself in charge of the country's finances as Chancellor of the Exchequer. He must therefore have been more aware than most of the cost of the war to Britain and her Empire.

Yet perhaps it was his visits to America in 1929 and 1931–32—after losing office—that really brought home to Churchill the post-war contrast between Britain and the United States. His impressions are vividly recorded in the letters he sent back and in the newspaper articles he was commissioned to write.

Of course, he did not like Prohibition! He described it as "a spectacle at once comic and pathetic" which had only resulted in "the vastest game of 'hunt the slipper' that was ever known." This may have been colored by his experience of entering the U.S. via Seattle, where he had great difficulty getting his medicinal alcohol through customs! He did like California, which he visited for the first time in 1929, describing its people as

the finest Anglo-Saxon stock to be found in the American Union. Blest with abundant food and pleasing dwellings, spread as widely as they may wish in garden cities, along the motor roads, or in their farms, the Californians have at their disposal all the natural and economic conditions necessary for health, happiness and culture.

Perhaps it is not surprising that he liked California. He was, after all, entertained by the film mag-

nate William Randolph Hearst, both at Hearst's private mansion in San Simeon and in Hollywood. He was introduced to Charlie Chaplin, whom he described as a "marvellous comedian—bolshy in politics, delightful in conversation." He also stayed for free at the exclusive Los Angeles Biltmore Hotel and even caught a large marlin on a fishing trip to Catalina Island.<sup>14</sup>

Churchill was also favorably impressed by Wall Street—this despite arriving there in time to witness the great crash at first hand, and the spectacle of a failed businessman throwing himself from a skyscraper.

Yet what really caught his eye was the strength and vibrancy of American business and industry. He toured the Bethlehem Steel factory, with its mechanized production line, and contrasted this with the outdated practices of British heavy industry. In December 1931, Churchill came face-to-face with the product of American industry when he was knocked down by a motorcar on Fifth Avenue. He had been attempting to find the apartment of his friend Bernard Baruch, having forgotten the address, and ended up in hospital—battered and bruised.

## England and World War II

This brings us back to the dark days of the 1930s. It was against this backdrop and with this knowledge of the power of the United States that Churchill approached the question of the future of Europe. In the United States he saw a huge trading area that was unencumbered by the many national boundaries, customs tariffs, different languages, and currencies that bedevilled pre-World War II Europe.

Here it must be remembered that at heart Churchill was a romantic: self-taught on the epic histories of Gibbon and Macauley, harking back to the unifying days of the Roman Empire. He was also a committed and lifelong exponent of free trade. As a free trader he advocated the creation of a single European trading bloc, and as a survivor of the First World War he favored the creation of ties that might bind the European nations together and prevent another Armageddon.

14. Extracts from articles written by Churchill on "California" and "Prohibition" in 1930, Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill Papers, CHAR 8/232. Extracts from letters from Winston to Clementine, 1929, Churchill Archives Centre, Baroness Spencer-Churchill Papers, CSCT 2/22.

These are the views that Churchill set out in an article entitled “The United States of Europe” in 1930. But the key to understanding this article is an understanding of where Churchill saw Britain. This is what he says:

But we have our own dream and our own task. We are with Europe, but not of it. We are linked, but not comprised. We are interested and associated but not absorbed.<sup>15</sup>

To Churchill, Britain was not just a European power. She was a global power. Her Empire gave her a presence on every continent. She should be prepared to act as a guarantor of Europe and to encourage, and perhaps participate in, schemes that brought Europeans closer together, but she also had the interests of her dominions to consider.

Then there was the question of the United States. Churchill felt, perhaps (because of his background) more keenly than most, that the shared language and culture gave Britain a unique position as the bridge between the old and new worlds. To quote the conclusion of his article:

Great Britain may claim, with equal justification, to play three roles simultaneously, that of an European nation, that of the focus of the British Empire, and that of a partner in the English speaking world. These are not three alternative parts, but a triple part....<sup>16</sup>

There is plenty of evidence to indicate that this is the worldview that Churchill took into the Second World War. His view of Britain as a European Great Power, and a guarantor of the Continent’s stability, meant that he was not prepared to support appeasement and allow a revived Germany to upset the balance of power.

His Victorian education, his romantic view of history, his experiences in the First World War, his awareness of his ancestry, and his own sense of destiny impelled him to speak out. He spoke against both a fascist totalitarian regime—which he saw as fundamentally anti-democratic—and against German militarism and Hitler’s proposed domination of Europe. The emphasis of his speech after Munich is

not about the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia so much as about “the disaster of the first magnitude which has befallen Great Britain and France.”

In May 1940, war came in earnest. Northern France and Belgium were quickly overrun. The British Expeditionary Force was evacuated from Dunkirk. However, Churchill refused to abandon his European policy. He diverted fighter squadrons—which were much-needed for the defense of Britain—to the skies above France. He made repeated personal trips across the Channel to try and shore up Reynaud’s faltering government, and even went so far as to suggest a union of the two countries to keep France in the conflict. Above all, he did not attempt to conclude a separate peace with Hitler.

It was as a partner in the English-Speaking world that Churchill appealed repeatedly to the United States. He was broadcasting to America before the outbreak of war, even though he held no formal position in the British government. His attempts to sway U.S. public opinion away from the prevailing mood of isolationism were not particularly successful, and Churchill found powerful voices—like those of Joseph Kennedy and Charles Lindbergh—ranged against him.

By the summer of 1940, the need for American support was paramount. The Soviet Union was not yet in the war, Western Europe was overrun, Britain was directly threatened with invasion, and the U-Boats were dominating the Atlantic. Churchill had no choice but to assiduously court President Roosevelt and American public opinion, but his well-known views and pro-American sentiments meant that he was the right man for this job.

Churchill’s wartime telegram correspondence with Roosevelt is impressive. Interestingly, it starts at the President’s request in September 1939. Why did Roosevelt do this? Churchill was not yet Prime Minister and had only just been brought back into the Cabinet as First Lord of the Admiralty. Strategically, Roosevelt had an interest in the war in the Atlantic: Politically, he had an interest in establishing a channel of communication with the most bellicose member of the British leadership. However, in part at

15. Extract from article, “The United States of Europe,” Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill Papers, CHAR 8/279.

16. *Ibid.*



least, this must be a testament to the fact that Churchill was already perceived as a friend of the United States.

Once Churchill becomes Prime Minister, the rate of correspondence increases dramatically. It is often very frank. On May 21, 1941, Churchill writes to Roosevelt expressing his anxiety about the American position: "Whatever happens you may be sure we shall fight on and I am sure we can at least save ourselves. But what is the good of that?"

But the messages are also increasingly warm in tone, noticeably so even before the two men actually meet. In January 1941, Roosevelt sends Churchill a hand-written message of encouragement quoting the famous verse by Longfellow:

Sail on, Oh Ship of State!  
Sail on, Oh union strong and great.  
Humanity with all its fears  
With all the hope of future years  
Is hanging breathless on thy fate.<sup>17</sup>

Churchill was so moved by this letter that he subsequently had it framed and placed on his study wall at Chartwell. Hence its faded appearance in the archives today. But, ever the politician, he also used it to try and bring more practical support from the U.S. He quoted it in his famous broadcast of February 9, 1941, perhaps his most celebrated appeal to North America, which ended: "Give us the tools and we will finish the job."

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor enabled Churchill to sleep the sleep of the saved. The German declaration of war on the United States brought America fully into the conflict and with her the real prospect of ultimate victory. It also sealed Churchill's reputation in the American psyche as the great war leader. His address to Congress in December 1941 was greeted by a standing ovation, and henceforth he would always be feted and honored in the U.S.

Yet American involvement came with a political price for Britain. When you see the famous photographs of Churchill at Yalta, he is almost physically squeezed out by Roosevelt and Stalin. Henceforth, it would be the United States and the Soviet Union

that dominated events, in terms of manpower, machinery, and—because of this—in terms of the dictation of the post war settlement.

Throughout the war, and against the tide of this new political reality, Churchill remained the proud defender of British imperialism, famously asserting in 1942 that he had "not become the King's first minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire." This brought him into conflict with Roosevelt—particularly over India—where Churchill wholeheartedly approved of the incarceration of Gandhi, a man he had famously described as a "half naked fakir."

This tripartite worldview—which saw Britain as the bridge between Europe, America, and Empire—extended into the post-war world. The only hope for war-ravaged Europe was closer union, which would also serve as a check to the expansion of Soviet communism. Simultaneously, the only guarantee of global security was increased partnership with the United States and the preservation of Britain's strong links with her dominions and the Commonwealth nations.

Churchill's views were not always well-received. We have seen how, at various times, his support for the Boer War, his opposition to independence for India, and his calls for stronger action against Hitler's Germany were criticized in the United States. Even his "Iron Curtain" address, now widely revered as the most famous speech of the Cold War, was attacked at the time, most notably in America by the *Wall Street Journal*. It was too early for many in the United States and Britain to see the Soviet Union as a threat rather than as an ally.

What I argue is that Churchill's approach to world events was broadly consistent. He opposed anti-democratic forces, advocated closer bonds with both the United States and Europe, while resolutely maintaining the independence of Britain and her Empire.

We can see this very clearly if we return to 1946 and look at the texts of the "Iron Curtain" and Hague speeches. Churchill's famous address at Fulton, Missouri, quickly became synonymous with its most famous passage, in which Churchill commented on the Soviet domination of Eastern

17. Hand-written letter from Roosevelt to Churchill, January 20, 1941, Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill Additional Papers, WCHL 13/1.

Europe: "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent." But the actual title of the speech was "The Sinews of Peace," and Churchill used this high-profile platform—he was introduced by President Harry Truman—to comment on the structures that he felt were necessary to prevent a Third World War.

A large part of the talk is given over to the need for strengthened Anglo-American relations. Churchill deliberately contrasts the United States' standing "at this time at the pinnacle of world power" with "the awful ruin of Europe" and argues that the fraternal association of the English-Speaking peoples is needed as a safeguard to prevent further war, tyranny, and privation. He calls for closer military cooperation and the establishment of joint naval and air bases. But he also states that "The safety of the World requires a new unity in Europe, from which no nation should be permanently outcast." He points out that America has now twice been dragged into conflicts of European origin. The solution that he advocates is for Britain and the United States to work together, negotiating from a position of strength with the Soviet Union and helping to build a more united, peaceful, and prosperous Europe.<sup>18</sup>

This message is repeated in reverse order for a European audience at the Hague in May. On this occasion Churchill comments first on the "Tragedy of Europe." He states that:

Two supreme tasks confront us. We have to revive the prosperity of Europe; and European civilisation must rise again from the chaos and carnage into which it has been plunged; and at the same time we have to devise those measures of world security which prevent disaster descending upon us again."

His solution is the same as that advocated at Fulton: There should be special associations of nations within the umbrella of the new United Nations organization. He refers specifically to Britain and the United States as one such association, and the United States of Europe as another.<sup>19</sup>

This is essentially the same worldview as that set out in Churchill's 1930s article—that of Britain's triple

role in the world, binding together the different interests of the United States, Europe, and the Empire or Commonwealth. It was a view that Churchill often repeated during the late 1940s and early 1950s.

In essence, he believed in the voluntary and fraternal association of nations. He supported the establishment of strong military, economic, and cultural ties. But when he spoke of union, whether European or Anglo-American, I believe that the language of his speeches and articles shows that he was thinking in terms of a union or partnership of equals rather than any new union that might transcend those partners.

## Conclusion

To conclude, there is no doubt that, on a purely personal level, Churchill did bridge the gap between the United States, Europe, and the Empire. When he died in January 1965, tributes poured in from all three, and all three were represented at his State Funeral. But, on a political level, he had to grudgingly accept the decline of Empire and was powerless to oppose the British withdrawal from India in 1947.

His legacy is partly the debate that still continues over Britain's destiny: Should we move closer to the European Union or seek to strengthen our special relationship with the United States? I am fairly confident that Churchill would have argued for both, although not at the cost of our sovereign independence. However, his legacy is also the survival, if not the strengthening, of parliamentary democracy itself.

I have presented my views. Of course, mine is just one interpretation. I hope that in doing so that I have given some indication of the huge range and scope of the evidence that survives in the Churchill Archives Centre and other repositories.

From tomorrow you can see more evidence at the Library of Congress in the exhibition "Churchill and the Great Republic." These documents are not dead and dusty relics: They record the origins and development of many of the great issues that face us today. They have huge potential to inform and educate the policymakers of today and tomorrow.

Our mission at Churchill College is both to preserve this material and to make it accessible. We are the equivalent of a presidential library, without the

18. Extracts from speech at Fulton, Missouri, March 5, 1946, Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill Papers, CHUR 5/4.

19. Extract from speech at The Hague, May 9, 1946, Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill Papers, CHUR 5/5.

public funding, and we need the support of American partners—like the Library of Congress and The Heritage Foundation—to carry this mission forward.

—Allen Packwood is Director of the Churchill Archives Centre at Churchill College, University of

Cambridge, in the United Kingdom. The author and the Heritage Foundation are grateful to Mr. Winston Churchill for his kind permission to reproduce quotations from the personal letters and writings of Sir Winston Churchill.