

from the university. He spent a year teaching there, before sneaking to one of the Central Radio Corporation facilities in the interior of the country, where he and his colleagues designed and built radio transmitters for Chinese government troops, often with scavenged and improvised parts. The International Settlement was overrun by the Japanese within months of his departure.

In 1945, Wang took advantage of an opportunity to spend a year in the United States. Shortly after arrival, it occurred to him to apply to study physics at Harvard. Since few G.I.'s had yet returned from the war, admissions were easier than they would have been in subsequent years, so Wang insists, and attributes his admission to the lucky timing of his arrival. After about a year, Wang took a job in Canada, but almost immediately returned to Cambridge, to a seven-dollar-per-week boarding house, and pursuit of his doctorate. Sixteen months later he had his Ph.D. in applied physics (a result of hard work, not luck).

Wang soon found a job as a research fellow at the Harvard Computation Laboratory, which was nurturing an infant technology, computers. In the most engaging section of *Lessons*, Wang describes how, within the next several years, he invented one of the essentials of computer technology (memory cores), patented his discovery, and founded his one-man company in an unfurnished 200-square-foot office.

Wang stresses the importance confidence played in his decision to enter business for himself. A man naturally moderate and prudent, he determined to build his business at a steady pace, one within the bounds of his own growing knowledge of business.

Within the course of the next 25 years, Wang essentially re-founded his company three times. In its first incarnation, Wang Laboratories sold memory chips and the computer expertise of Dr. Wang and a small group of colleagues. In the early and mid-1960s, Wang Laboratories developed and sold the first desk-top calculator, called LOCI (an acronym for logarithmic calculating instrument). It was an enormous success, especially on Wall Street. This, too, was a stroke of good fortune, as Dr. Wang discovered when he took his company public in the late 1960s.

One of the marks of a great entrepreneur is the ability to foresee changing circumstances and alter his company accordingly—though that means, in a sense, erasing part of his own life's history and legacy. By the early 1970s, Dr. Wang could foresee that the microchip would make calculators into a commodity. Sales would

be based merely on the lowest price. Thus he transformed Wang Laboratories once again, this time pioneering the office computer market, which Wang dominated for most of the 1970s.

My favorite passage in *Lessons* is rendered all the more delightful by the reader's sense that Dr. Wang has made his living doing what he likes doing, and he considers that the mark of his success. The paragraph is as follows:

We established the [family] trust with Marty Kirkpatrick as trustee [in 1957], and . . . a fifteen-thousand-dollar par debenture. . . . This is the only asset I ever gave the trust. . . . Today, although the Family Trust is some fifty-thousand times larger than it was at the outset, Marty is still the trustee.

Joseph Epstein has written that readers lose interest in biographies at precisely the point at which the hero succeeds. Dr. Wang is a great man, who

has done great things, and given greatly to improve life in and around Boston. Unfortunately, however, his autobiography does not escape Epstein's dictum.

The last third of the book engages neither its readers nor, it seems, its writers (*Lessons* was written with the assistance of Eugene Linden). The further one reads beyond the first half of *Lessons*, the more its prose and perspective degenerate into those of a corporate annual report.

Of course, the truth behind Epstein's wise comment is that people read biographies out of self-interest. The business biography, especially, is a high-class form of self-improvement book. The further *Lessons* proceeds, the more its focus shifts from Wang the man to Wang the company. Yet it is Dr. An Wang who interests us, whose life inspires, and whose lessons we seek to learn. □

WINSTON S. CHURCHILL:
ROAD TO VICTORY 1941-1945
Martin Gilbert/Houghton Mifflin/\$40.00

Spencer Warren

Surely the longest biography ever written, Martin Gilbert's magnificent life of Winston Churchill reaches its seventh volume in *Road to Victory*, which takes us from America's entry into the war in December 1941 to Germany's surrender in May 1945. As the authorized biographer, Gilbert sees his role as chronicler rather than interpreter. He has artfully spun Churchill's government and private papers, as well as memoirs and diaries of Churchill's colleagues and staff, into a compelling narrative of 1351 pages, charting Churchill's course, often day by day, through the momentous decisions of the war.

Of the countless strategic and political issues confronted by Churchill and recounted here by Gilbert, the most important are the timing of the opening of the second front in France and Anglo-American dealings with the Soviet Union. After America's entry into the war, the American chiefs of staff, led by General Marshall, proposed an invasion of France for September 1942. Both the Americans and the British saw northwest Europe as the decisive

theater of operations and also felt the keen imperative of relieving pressure on Russia, where the Germans, a year before Stalingrad, still had the upper hand. Stalin was pressing, almost pleading, for a landing in France. But Churchill and his chiefs of staff (led by General Sir Alan Brooke), who, unlike the Americans, had had first-hand experience of German might, had a far more realistic appreciation of the difficulties of a cross-Channel invasion.

At their frequent conferences in 1942 and 1943, Churchill and his service chiefs persuaded their American colleagues of the advantages of campaigns first in French North Africa and then in Sicily and the Italian mainland; the British were already engaged against the Germans in Egypt and Libya, and Algeria and Morocco were occupied only by the forces of Vichy France. Meantime, they reasoned, forces could



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be built up in Britain for a cross-Channel invasion. President Roosevelt agreed, seeing this as the best way to get Americans into combat in the European theater in 1942, and thus solidify his Germany-first strategy. The landings were made in Algeria and Morocco in November 1942, but American timidity prevented the British landing in Tunisia. This allowed the Germans to counter with powerful forces, delaying conclusion of the campaign for many months, until May 1943.

During the stalemate in Tunisia, the Anglo-American dispute over the second front came to a head at the Casablanca Conference in January 1943. Marshall advocated closing down Mediterranean operations after Tunisia in favor of an invasion of France as soon as possible.

But Churchill's influence with Roosevelt and the force of the British chiefs' arguments that the enemy should be continuously engaged (an invasion of France was not possible until later in the year) carried the day. The Allies agreed the next objective would be clearance of the Mediterranean for shipping and, to facilitate this, a landing in Sicily. Finally, in Washington in May 1943, they agreed an invasion of France was not possible that year (ironically, in part because the Americans were sending too many landing craft to the Pacific despite the Germany-first strategy). Operation Overlord, as the cross-Channel invasion became known, was set for May 1, 1944.

Following the liberation of Sicily in the summer of 1943, Churchill succeeded in persuading the Americans to continue on to the Italian mainland. He again argued that Allied forces had to be kept engaged somewhere, rather than sit idle till the next spring and let the Germans catch their breath (and probably reinforce France). He also stressed the advantages of knocking Italy out of the war.

As the Italian campaign proceeded, and Mussolini was overthrown, Churchill's fertile imagination was fired by the possibility of a rapid advance up the peninsula, followed by a strike into southern France or eastern Europe. Deeply troubled also about the hazards of Overlord, he fought against withdrawals of troops for that operation and came to see Italy as the main theater. In this he was wrong and the Americans right. There was no "soft underbelly" of Europe and Italy was not the road to Germany; the Apennines made rapid advance difficult and, beyond them, the Alps barred the way. Northwest Europe was indeed the place to make the massive, decisive blow. →

But it was Churchill's caution and realism that checked the Americans' impetuosity and brought about the conditions for the success of the American strategy, which at one time had also been his and which in the end he supported with all his usual enthusiasm and vigor. The Mediterranean strategy was crucial to the success of Overlord. In June 1944, the Germans had twenty-eight divisions in Italy. Had these been available for the battle in Normandy, the invasion might have failed. In addition, from 1942 to 1944 the Allied air forces had crushed the Luftwaffe and had also damaged the French rail network, limiting sharply the Germans' ability to reinforce Normandy. In those two years of war the German reserve had been badly depleted. Further, the added time gave Allied, mainly British, deception

schemes (Operation Bodyguard) time to work so effectively as to play a key role in Hitler's holding back Panzer divisions from the landing beaches; Hitler was convinced that Normandy was a diversion from the main landing, which he thought would be across the Pas de Calais.

Churchill's record is more mixed on the second major issue, relations with Soviet Russia. As the original (and still most eloquent) anti-Communist—he was the leading proponent of Allied intervention against the Bolsheviks in 1918—Churchill entered into dealings with Stalin with a healthy skepticism. In October 1942 he wrote, "It would be a measureless disaster if Russian barbarism overlaid the culture and independence of . . . Europe." The fear

haunted him throughout the war (and led him to send British troops to Greece late in 1944 to prevent a Communist takeover).

Yet he was under a number of constraints. Until Overlord, Russia carried the main burden of the war; there were even some indications that it would make a separate peace. Moreover, Churchill knew that with the collapse of France and the coming destruction of Germany, no power would stand with Britain against Russia in the future except the unpredictable United States. And he could not diverge from Roosevelt, who assured Churchill he "could personally handle Stalin"; FDR was also eager to enlist Russia in the war with Japan. While Churchill's realism placed limits on how far he would go to placate Russia, these factors, along with his own hopes for a peaceful world, led him to conciliate Stalin. At times he even seemed influenced by Stalin's charm.

This ambivalence can be seen in Churchill's policy on the main issue dividing the Big Three, the future of Poland. He agreed to let Russia keep the area of Poland it had annexed in the infamous Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of 1939. He had no choice. Yet he then fought hard for Poland's independence and was prepared to sunder the alliance over the issue once Germany was defeated.

In retrospect, after forty years' experience with Soviet duplicity, we can say that Churchill (and, much more, Roosevelt) was at times too accommodating towards Stalin. His Polish policy was right in the fundamentals, but he showed too much readiness to pressure the Polish government in London on Russia's behalf, and also failed to get a *quid pro quo* for his efforts. The atmosphere at the Teheran and Yalta conferences (two good arguments against summits) was too friendly. Along with Roosevelt's unhelpful attitude when he wanted to take a tougher line, this may have emboldened Stalin to be more aggressive in asserting control over eastern Europe.

In the weeks before Roosevelt's death in April 1945, as Russian repression in Poland made clear Stalin's bad faith at Yalta, Churchill pushed for a confrontation. At the end of the war he strongly urged President Truman that Allied troops not be withdrawn back across the Elbe to the zonal boundaries which had been agreed for the postwar division of Germany. But this was not possible. Following heavy fighting on Iwo Jima and in the midst of fanatical opposition on Okinawa, the Americans had to withdraw their armies from Europe for the expected invasion of Japan. Nor would American and British public opinion, which had been conditioned by strongly pro-Russian

propaganda, have understood or countenanced a break right after the joyous victory in Europe.

But in the end there is probably little Churchill could have done given the military developments that allowed the Red Army to sweep into the heart of Europe. Much has been written about Churchill's opposition to Operation Anvil, the invasion of southern France in August 1944 as an ancillary to Overlord, which required further withdrawals from Italy. Churchill urged instead that the Italian campaign be pressed to its conclusion and that a force then be sent through to Yugoslavia, cutting off German forces in the Balkans, and marching on Vienna. This might have saved some of eastern Europe (but not Poland) from the Russians. Gilbert accepts this analysis, but he also produces evidence that the British Joint Planning Staff and General Brooke had grave doubts about the practicability of the operation, which would have involved a winter campaign in the Alps.

More important for the future of Europe were the conduct of the campaign in France and the generalship of Dwight Eisenhower and his chief lieutenants. The Germans' collapse at the end of the battle in Normandy in July-August 1944 gave the Western Allies the opportunity to march into Germany and quite possibly end the war in 1944. (They would also have saved perhaps hundreds of thousands of casualties; two-thirds of allied losses in the French and German campaigns came after September.) Russian forces could have ended the war well to the east of Germany. This opportunity was lost in part through Eisenhower's indecision and inability to overcome the problems inherent to coalition warfare.

Gilbert has been much criticized for heavily emphasizing fact over analysis. Some issues, especially Churchill's dealings with Stalin, need interpretation. But on the whole this criticism misses the point. As the volumes are now running well over 1000 pages each, analysis can only come at the expense of the extraordinarily rich detail which is the hallmark of the work. Gilbert is letting Churchill tell his own long, immensely complex, fascinating story. It is up to others to analyze and judge.

One more volume is to come. That the reader can be engrossed by thousands of pages of detail about one person is itself fitting testament to Churchill's greatness and largeness of spirit. The reader who has time for only one volume ought to turn to the preceding one, *Finest Hour, 1939-1941*, when Britain stood at the abyss and Churchill's courage, nobility, and eloquence were her salvation. □

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MEXICO: CHAOS ON OUR DOORSTEP

Sol Sanders/Madison Books/\$18.95

Herb Greer

When the Viet Cong were the world's favorite heroes, and the United States was Amerika-with-a-big-K, it was awfully modish to speak and write about the arrogance of power. A parallel phenomenon was common at the time; it is still prominent in the sort of compassionate reportage which makes Daniel Ortega into a neo-George Washington, the victim of American oppression. The phenomenon I mean is the arrogance of weakness. It is expressed among us by the knee-jerk assumption that because a country or some ethnic group is, in the cant expression, "underdeveloped" or "oppressed," it is therefore instilled with a chemically pure brand of virtue. Our liberals like to contrast this invidiously with the strength, the prosperity, and the confidence of America, which they hold up as the *felo de se* of Western democracy.

In a little book called *The Ordeal of Change*, Eric Hoffer wrote: "It has been often said that power corrupts. But it is perhaps equally important to realize that weakness too corrupts. Power corrupts the few, while weakness corrupts the many. Hatred, malice, rudeness, intolerance, and suspicion are the fruits of weakness."

The majority of Western media reporting on Latin America is rotten with the arrogance of weakness, while public attitudes in Latin America—where they concern the United States—are riddled with the corruption described by Hoffer. In this book Sol Sanders attempts to correct, the one and explain the other in the case of Mexico. He provides some information that will interest the general reader, but the book has to be handled with care. Much of its discussion is spoiled by obstinate superficiality, apparent haste, and much lapsing into tabloid-speak, beginning with the title: *Mexico: Chaos on Our Doorstep*.

The author says that the purpose of this book is "to present a panorama of Mexico's problems as they relate to the U.S." His text records a number of alarming observations: Mexico is not a real democracy but a fief of the PRI (Party of Institutionalized Revolution),

Herb Greer is an American writer and playwright living in England.

which runs a sclerotic and corrupt system of government that may well break down. Among the factors tending to this is an economy ruined by socialist dogma, largely inherited from fatuous American academics. These people still toady to xenophobic Mexican Marxists, a breed that infects Mexico's intellectual elite like mold rotting damp bread. Mexico offers help to those who wish to subvert the United States. In particular it harbors the largest contingent of KGB personnel this side of the Iron Curtain, and furnishes a conduit for the infiltration of Soviet agents into America, North and South. Naturally Mexico's government supports the Marxist-Leninist regimes in Cuba and Nicaragua. It also abets a venal police force, helping in the traffic of drugs across Mexico's northern border; a few token arrests have done nothing to change this. The Mexican population is growing like a runaway tumor and cannot feed itself, much less attain some version of the Good Life. And the principal feeling of Mexicans toward their *gringo* neighbors is a venomous envy and loathing, sometimes mitigated by grudging admiration. If the Mexican system should collapse, this loathing would not prevent a flood of refugees, millions of them, from crossing into the United States. Collapse and exodus would allow the USSR and Cuba to create "greater problems" for the United States. (Mr. Sanders mentions these "problems" several times, but is never specific about them.) American policy worldwide would be "skewed," demanding "an immediate reordering of military priorities of a magnitude not seen since Pearl Harbor." Mr. Sanders is horrified that American public opinion, even among "Hispanics," seems indifferent to these facts and contingencies, and that our government has no cogent policy to cope with "the chaos that is descending on the Latin States."

Like the expression about "greater problems," Mr. Sanders uses the word "chaos" vaguely, apparently in order to create a mood of impending doom. The curious quality of his melodrama, coming as it does from an obvious conservative, is that the frame-

work is so very Marxist. It is the typical Red Revolutionary or quasi-Jacobin scenario, with internal troubles weakening the system and eventually causing a general *effondrement*, followed by the rule of hard men and horrors that will send millions of suffering wretches into the sanctuary of our (formerly Mexican) Southwest. The precedents of Cuba and Nicaragua are not labored, but they are a grim double presence in the wings.

Other possibilities are offered in rather a token manner, but Mr. Sanders strongly implies that Mexico is going to fall apart, unless the Mexicans simply abandon cultural and political attitudes which they have inherited from centuries of Spanish rule, and which are the tissue of their politics today. Given that Mexican (not to say human) history makes this radical and collective change of spirit very, very unlikely, one is driven to the conclusion that this book is actually *predicting* a collapse, and urging Americans and

their government to get ready for it, or else.

This Vance Packard approach to international politics is undermined by several passages in the book itself. For example:

Mexican society, for all its weaknesses and failures, has proved through the centuries to have great inner resources, great flexibility, and built-in attributes that keep it operating against enormous odds. These include close family relationships that provide economic and social security in a society that has few government welfare services, and a feudal hierarchy in the villages and city *barrios* that keeps order and provides an indigenous social organization, however archaic and undemocratic to the modern eye. The tradition of *aguantar*—to bear suffering and affliction—which is so much a part of the Indian heritage of the poor in Mexico, also permits the society to ride out bad economic and political periods that might destroy a more rigid and sophisticated culture.

A little warmed-over McLuhan—TV, the global village, and all that—is of-

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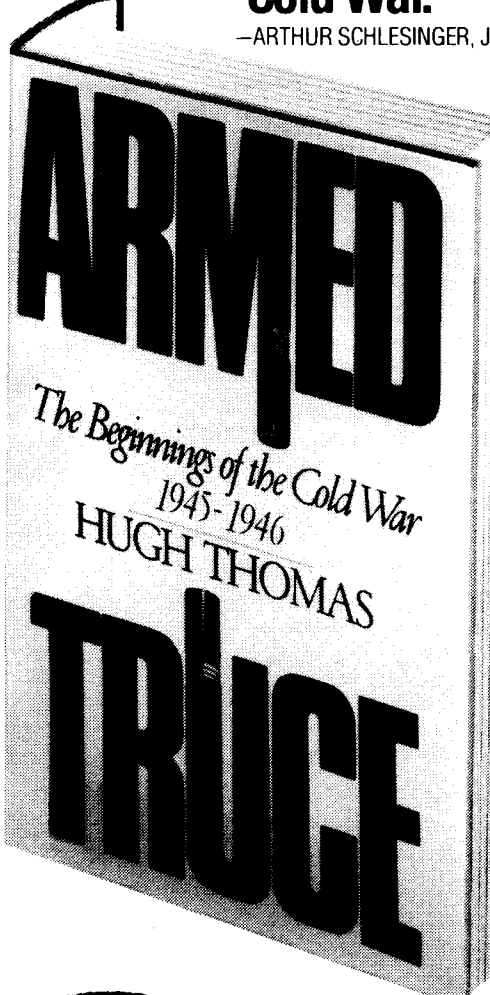
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