

History essays - winston churchill war



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These were the words of Winston Churchill when he entered the Buckingham Palace one day, “ But whether it be peace or war... we must strive to frame some system of human relations in the future which will put an end to this prolonged hideous uncertainty, which will let the working and creative forces of the world get on with their job, and which will no longer leave the whole life of mankind dependent upon the virtues, the caprice, or the wickedness of a single man.”

At about this same time, thousands of people almost worshipped this man, an enigmatic personality and a charismatic leader, who rose to power because of his charisma and his leadership qualities. At this point of time, this great leader was concerned more with the essentials of balancing the harmony and the eternity of his beloved country, England, and he seemed to be quite completely weary and tired of politics.

However, this did not mean that the events and happenings taking place all around him did not affect him at all; in fact, it was quite the contrary. He was frankly horrified and appalled at the Fascist rabble in Italy, at the Reichweir rumored to be creating secret aerodromes in Russia, and at the haranguing of Hitler in Germany. Churchill felt that all these incidents could not be considered to be independent; they were all the frank expressions of nations that were demonstrating a certain will power and self command. This was probably the primary reason why Winston Churchill decided that he would come out of retirement from his country house and stand as an independent candidate for the by-election of 1924.

Although it is true that this leader lost in this election, as he had in the past two others, it did not deter him in the least, and on the other hand, he became aware that he was an individual who had managed to gather enough support from several factions during the elections. Mr. Baldwin, at this time, offered Winston Churchill a Conservative seat at Epping, and this meant that this leader could return to Epping as a full fledged Conservative leader. It would help to get an idea about the man, and his life, before one can assess his leadership qualities.

Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill was born in the year 1874 in Oxfordshire, to prominent Tory politician Lord Randolph Churchill. The young boy grew up under his father's tutelage, and when he was old enough, he saw action both at India and at Sudan. He was captured during the Boer War when he was working as a journalist, and he managed to escape from prison later.

In 1900, Winston Churchill was appointed the Conservative Member of Parliament for Oxfordshire, but he was apparently disillusioned by his party's activities, and he therefore joined the Liberal Party in 1904. When in 1905 the Liberal Party won the elections, Churchill was appointed as the Under Secretary, after which he entered the Cabinet as the president of the Board of Trade. In 1910, he was appointed the Home Secretary, after which he became the Lord of Admiralty, a post that he held during the First World War.

However, after the disastrous Dardanelles campaign, for which Churchill became the scapegoat, he resigned and joined the Army. From the year 1917 onwards, Winston Churchill was appointed leader of several

governmental posts, until the year 1940 when the Prime Minister of England Neville Chamberlain resigned, and Winston Churchill took his place.

It must be remembered that Churchill had been opposing Nazi developments in Germany for a long while now, and he took this opportunity to oppose the Nazis officially, while at the same time refusing to surrender to Germany. This act in itself served as an inspiration for the people of England at the time, and this leader worked tirelessly through the war, and built up close ties with the President of the United States of America, Roosevelt, while at the same time trying his best to maintain cordial relations with the Soviet Union. In 1945 during the elections, Churchill lost power, but he remained the leader of the opposition.

At the time, he warned his people of the Cold War and tried his best to encourage European and also trans-Atlantic unity. In 1951, the charismatic Winston Churchill became the Prime Minister again, but in 1955 he resigned his post, but he remained a working and accomplished and capable Member of Parliament until his death in the year 1965. Winston Churchill has been known for his early accomplishments in life, in much the same way as other leaders like Lenin, Stalin and Hitler, but there is an intrinsic difference between him and other leaders.

While the others mentioned above tried to use their victories in order to create dictatorships in their country, Winston Churchill was an individual who was affected by war, and who grabbed any opportunity he could to make use of the war to lead his own country towards an inevitable victory.

Perhaps, the fact that Churchill belonged to a military family helped him a great deal in his endeavors, and when he was sent to India and Sudan on various assignments, the young man, barely twenty four at the time, wrote to his mother back in England, “ I never felt the slightest nervousness, I felt as cool as I do now”. What was even more surprising was that Winston Churchill had been posted both as a war correspondent as well as a serving soldier in India and in Sudan, and it was here that the young man revealed two other aspects of his character: he had a literary bent of mind, and he also had a keen interest in public affairs.

As a matter of fact, although Churchill wrote all his life, politics and public affairs almost seemed to consume him; perhaps the fact that his father Randolph Churchill had been a public failure as a politician spurred the young man on, and perhaps to, this was the reason why he was determined to succeed where his own father had failed before him. It is important to note that Randolph Churchill had despised and detested his son, and he probably saw him as a show off and a good for nothing individual.

In his own words, writing to his mother the Duchess of Marlborough, he criticized his son heavily, and said that his son lacked “ cleverness, knowledge and any capacity for settled work. He has a great talent for show-off, exaggeration and make-believe...” However, although his father’s comments must have hurt the young Churchill, he sought to react by trying to venerate his father’s memory. This in itself shows his strength of character, wherein the young man, instead of falling prey to petty vindictiveness and nastiness and spite, sought to restore his father’s lost honor in the British parliament.

In the year 1935 Winston Churchill knew enough of world affairs to warn the House of Commons of the importance of “ self-preservation and also of the human and the world cause of the preservation of free governments and of Western civilization against the ever advancing sources of authority and despotism.” It must be stated that Winston Churchill was a natural born leader, who managed to accomplish a great many things during his lifetime.

Take for example the time when he managed to escape imprisonment immediately after he was captured during the Boer War: he became an acknowledged and accepted national hero in his country after this fact, and at the time when Edward III was abdicated, Winston Churchill opted to show his deep support for the deposed leader, despite the government’s complete disapproval, and against popular advice.

The great man chose to believe in what he felt must be done, and he bravely managed to carry this out, despite all odds. Another accomplishment was that Winston Churchill managed to lead his beloved country through the Second World War, and he also made sure that he made his opposition to Hitler and his atrocities publicly known. This was the reason why Churchill refused to make peace with Germany while Hitler was in power, and instead, he chose to consult with American President Roosevelt and with Soviet Stalin, to create and plan a victory over Germany in the immediate future.

This great leader was not an individual who would bow to anyone; he would follow his instincts and act accordingly. Using his insight and intuition, he warned his country of the expansive tendencies being exhibited by the Soviet Union, and he even coined a specific term for this phenomenon: ‘ Iron

Curtain’. As mentioned earlier, Winston Churchill proved to be an excellent and charismatic leader when he led his country during the Second World War. Experts often state that almost the whole of Churchill’s career had been a sort of training and preparation for this event: that of leading his country during war.

It would help to remember that Churchill was an intense patriot, and he loved his country more than anything else in the world. This individual was also a great believer in the greatness and immensity of his country, and he was constantly aware of the historic role that England had played in Europe, in the Empire, and also in the world in general.

Churchill was an individual who thrived on challenges, and he would always rise to the occasion in any sort of crisis that his country was facing. Since he was extremely fond of politics, and the workings of his country based on the political happenings happening within his country, he became a veritable master of politics, and it had often been felt that Winston Churchill was nursing all his many faculties, and reining in his inexhaustible sense of energy for the time when he would be able to lead his country in the World war II.

This was the time when the brilliant leader could showcase Britain’s values for the entire world, and he grabbed the opportunity to do just this. It was on September 3 1939 that Britain happened to finally declare war on Germany, and at the same time, the then Prime Minister of England, Chamberlain appointed Winston Churchill as the chief in charge of the Admiralty.

On the fleet, there was much rejoicing and celebration: “Winston is back!” went the saying back and forth. The US President Franklin Roosevelt sent a congratulatory letter to Churchill over the appointment, and thus began a long term and memorable correspondence between the two world leaders. It is often stated that it was Winston Churchill’s leadership as the Prime Minister during the Second World War that served to help Britain, until then an isolated power, survive successfully the Battle of Britain, which ultimately led Britain to gain a tremendous victory over Nazi Germany.

It is also stated that his form of generous leadership was desperately needed by his country at the time, and perhaps too, it was the man’s obstinacy and stubbornness to enter into any sort of negotiation with Germany, and the will power to adhere to his stand, no matter what, that brought victory to his country, Britain. (Del Testa; Lemoine; Strickland, 2001) In reality, Churchill’s achievements have been at times so much exaggerated that the leader has become a fictional character in several novels that deal with the World War and incidents related to the war across the world.

In Winston Churchill’s own words, he led his beloved country Britain through her “walk with destiny”, and this, a destiny for which the leader had been preparing all his political life, as mentioned earlier. Churchill’s qualities of far-sightedness, his sturdiness, tenacity, stubbornness, his obstinacy in the face of much opposition, his great valor and courage and the will to win and conquer despite the odds were all the characteristics of a great world leader, and it was these qualities that helped the man garner enormous support both at home and also abroad. Furthermore, Winston Churchill was an accomplished speaker, a great politician, and he loved his country.

He was also a journalist, and he knew what words would inspire and what would not. In later stages, the very sight of Churchill, with his trademark cigar perched at the corner of his mouth, his fingers raised in his characteristic 'V' sign for Victory would serve to inflame the masses, and at the time, the people would do anything for him, and follow him anywhere he would choose to lead them.

He became known as 'John Bull', a British mythical character, and a symbol of victory for the common people of his country, and Churchill believed strongly that his very destiny lay in great service to his country. When he was chosen to be the Prime Minister of his country, Churchill said these immortal words, "I felt as if I were walking with destiny, and that all my past life had been in preparation for this hour and this trial", and this was how this great individual and appointed leader of his country led Britain through one of the toughest wars of history.

Take this fierce oratory, for example, an awe inspiring speech that inflamed the people of his country and kept them from losing heart delivered on June 4, 1940, at the time when it appeared as if all of Europe might fall soon: "... we shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end ... we shall fight in the seas and oceans ... we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills, we shall never surrender..." When his people listened to this speech, they felt inspired enough to think of never ever giving up, even though it appeared as if they may fail eventually. This was the courage and determination that Churchill displayed at every turn.

In 1939, immediately after Winston Churchill was recalled to duty as the First Lord of the Admiralty, the first wave of German military power had already managed to overwhelm Poland, and immediately afterward, threatened to topple Northwestern Europe, and also to make France fall. In 1940, at the time when France had already fallen, Churchill was called to power and responsibility by a spontaneous revolt in his country carried out by the best elements in all the parties, and it was a well accepted and recognized fact that he alone, among all the other political leaders, had had no part to play in the disaster of the 1930's, and that he was blameless.

This meant that he had been chosen by the very will of the entire nation, and that he enjoyed his people's support at every turn. It would be during the next five years, as the Prime Minister of England, and the leader who would lead and head his country in the ongoing World War that Winston Churchill's career became almost one with that of his nation, and closely linked with its survival. It must be remembered that until the year 1941, Britain had fought all alone in the World War II. At this time, Churchill took it upon himself to inspire resistance at any cost, and to oppose Nazi Germany no matter what happened. He felt reasonably sure that Britain would be able to resist Nazi Germany eventually and that England would not fall prey to Germany any time in the near future.

Churchill also started to organize the defense of his country, so that it would stand as a bastion when it would be returned to the continent of Europe. It was this charismatic and appealing leader that managed to bathe in a new life into the government, and into his beloved country and her people. In his own words, when addressing the House of Commons upon being appointed

as the Prime Minister of England, he said, “ I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat: You ask, what is our policy? I will say: It is to wage war, by sea, land, and air, with all our might. You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: Victory.” The ultimate aim was for Churchill an undisputed ‘ Victory’ for his country and his people.

How exactly did Winston Churchill lead his country during the Second World War? What were his actions? How did he inspire such great confidence in his abilities and performance as a leader of his country? The historian George Best describes how Winston Churchill went about protecting and defending his beloved country.

As mentioned earlier, the reputation that the great leader had at this time was that of a gifted politician, who had already changed his party twice, and who could be quite an impulsive type of individual, who could at different times be susceptible to impractical enthusiasms and interests. He was also recognized as the person who felt confident enough to state boldly and in the open his real feelings about the then Prime Minister of England Neville Chamberlain, and his foreign policies.

Six years later, after he had led his country successfully through the World War II, Winston Churchill became renowned throughout the world as a enigmatic person and a great statesman who was the champion of freedom and democracy and independence for his country, and who was victorious in his endeavors to guide and lead his country during the war. However, it must be noted that it was not until nine months after his appointment that there were some results. On the 10th of May 1940, the challenge that was facing

the country looked very formidable indeed, but things looked even worse about six short weeks later.

The British Army was almost captured at Dunkirk, but managed to escape. Although the escape was a victory in itself, it was, in military terms, a shocking setback to the ongoing campaign, and soon enough, Britain was facing an unforeseen threat, that of invasion, something that she had not faced since the year 1805! It was Churchill's able leadership that managed to save his country from such humiliation, and it was Churchill who managed to persuade the cabinet and the parliament that Britain and its empire could survive, through his awe inspiring speeches at ever juncture.

Churchill even went so far as to forbid and prohibit any type of defeatist talk within his hearing, and he also refused to be put on the defensive for any reason whatsoever. He remained firm and strong and capable, and his behavior proved to be extremely heartening to his people, who were almost on the verge of crumbling down in the face of opposition and the prospect of defeat and humiliation.

This was how Winston Churchill managed to bring his people through the ' Battle of Britain', win the battle, and make sure that invasion was no longer imminent and looming down upon them, and teach Londoners how to survive what became known in later times as ' the Blitz'. This victory carried him through the next battle, the Second World War, and he remained confident and positive through these difficult times, thereby leading his country through one of the biggest battles she had ever been involved in, in recent years.

As mentioned earlier, Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt started to communicate with each other when Churchill was appointed as the Lord of the Admiralty by his Prime Minister. It must be mentioned here that it was this relationship of these two great leaders that managed to bridge the existing gaps between the two countries England and the United States of America, and which helped the leaders fight for their own causes, while also keeping in mind the others', in a friendly manner.

Take for example the letters that Churchill, being a journalist, wrote to Roosevelt, urging him to help the Allies in the ongoing war in Europe. It was in essence these letters that helped bridge the gap between the two countries, and which heralded the beginning of a diplomatic relationship that would help in the struggle to defeat Hitler and the Axis powers. Acting upon Churchill's advice, Roosevelt proposed aid to Europe in the ' Lend-Lease Act', according to which the United States of America would supply financial and military aid to Great Britain and the Soviet Union.

In return America would have a ninety nine-year lease in places that could be considered to be in threat at any time in the future. In the year 1941, the Congress approved of the Act, and this in essence could be said to have changed the very course of history, because Roosevelt's generosity and Churchill's grim determination to bring in a defeat to Hitler and his atrocities combined together into a potent combination, which brought an end to Hitler's tyranny.

In the words of Sir Isaiah Berlin, " Churchill's political imagination has something of the same magical power to transform, it is a magic that

belongs equally to demagogues and great democratic leaders: Franklin Roosevelt, who as much as any man altered his country's inner image of itself, and of its character and its history, possessed it in a high degree... Churchill stands at almost the opposite pole.

He too does not fear the future, and no man has ever loved life more vehemently and infused so much of it into everyone and everything that he has touched. But whereas Roosevelt, like all great innovators, had a half-conscious premonitory awareness of the coming shape of a society, not wholly unlike that of an artist, Churchill, for all his extrovert air, looks within, and his strongest sense is the sense of the past." These sentences give one a peek into the relationship that was shared by two great leaders, Churchill and Roosevelt, both of whom fought for a common cause, the welfare of their country and of her people.

There are some researchers and reviewers and political analysts, however, who do feel that the relationship has been given too much importance and hype, and the truth may be quite exaggerated, and that the relationship was that of uneasy friendliness. Some others have felt that by forging such a relationship with an America President, Winston Churchill had in fact led his country into developing an unwanted alliance with America.

The two leaders had different agendas, but they were united in one aspect, Hitler would have to go, and both the countries would try their very best to drive him out of power, and it was apparently Churchill's strong hope that he would be able to utilize Roosevelt and his power to shore up the sagging British Empire. Winston Churchill, after having headed his country through

turbulent and uneasy times of the Second World War, remained as the Prime Minister, and when he turned eighty in the year 1954, Anthony Eden, several members of parliament, and even his own wife urged him to give up the post, as he appeared to have aged rather rapidly over the past few years.

In the year 1955, Winston Churchill resigned as the Prime Minister of England, and he held on to his post as a Member of Parliament. Writing had always been his strong point, and through his life, Churchill had penned several books and written for several journals and magazines, and had even won a Nobel Prize for his work. This served him in good stead at this time, and the great leader managed to complete his four volume work, 'The History of the English Speaking Peoples.'

Some of the time he would spend visiting his old friends and the rest, on taking long cruises on yachts that belonged to his multi-billionaire friend Aristotle Onassis. His wife, however, did not seem to approve of this extravagant lifestyle, and this brought about a separation between the two.

Soon afterwards, Winston Churchill started to suffer from symptoms of depression that he had been prone to earlier too, and he felt that his entire life had been a sheer waste. Although it was Winston Churchill who headed the country towards a victory in the war, the British Empire had in fact almost disappeared at this time, and almost half of Europe had come under the Communist regime.

Churchill also feared that Socialism was threatening the England that he had loved with all his might, all his life. However, this able and wonderful leader had reached the fag end of his life, and he was tired and almost ready to

give up his life. At the time, he engaged in bitter quarrels with all his children, Randolph, Mary, Diana and Sarah. He seemed to be waiting for death, and he would often remark to his daughter who would sit with him, “My life is ended, but it is not yet over”. (Hamilton, 2006)

He still remained, however, a popular figure, especially within the United States of America, until in 1963, the Congress happened to vote to make him one of the first ‘ honorary citizens’ of America, and life continued in the same vein. On his ninetieth birthday, Churchill was surrounded by his family: his wife, children and grandchildren. Well wishers had gathered outside his window, and a frail and weak Churchill struggled to get to the window to make his famous ‘ V’ for Victory sign. Cheered by the crowds, Churchill was very happy indeed.

That same evening, he suffered a stroke, and went into a coma. Two weeks later, Winston Churchill, the great leader, able administrator and excellent orator and politician, who had overcome many a handicap so that he could serve his country and his people better, breathed his last on January 24, 1965, which coincidentally, also happened to be the seventieth anniversary of his father’s death. He will always be remembered as the man, who led his country in the Second World War, and who ousted Hitler, thereby saving democracy for his country, and for the world. (Hamilton, 2006)