

was unique. His style, mode of governance, deeply rooted and strongly held system of beliefs, and importantly his gaping weaknesses, should serve as a serious model upon which to reconstruct the training and choosing of our political leaders and governmental workers. It is not a perfect model. But certainly it is better than the ad-hoc, clandestine, shaded political leadership system we have today. Who would you rather have a Chirac, a Clinton, a Chretien or a Churchill?

Character

In reading any volume about Churchill's life the most blinding aspect in understanding his success is the quality, depth and strength of his character. Many other men would long have given up, or perished in their chosen professions, if they had been subject to the same trials as Churchill. In general from studying his life I can safely state that he never took the easy route. He was certainly never offered the easy spoils. Yet he never bowed his knee to opinion polls, party whips, or popular expressions that ran contrary to his own judgement and sense of purpose. In comparing Churchill with other 'greats' of the 20th century there is no one that had to endure the opprobrium, distrust or number of setbacks as did Churchill. Even the witch hunt instigated against William Clinton, is pretty mild stuff compared with what the press had to say about Churchill during the first half of this century. I am always amazed that Churchill was able not only to survive through it all, but survive with a smile.

This is not to romanticise his or anyone else's macho strength and egotism. Both in large doses are negative. However, without strength of character change is impossible, adversity cannot be overcome and good never triumphs over evil. In the dawning age of 'Principle Parties' as replacements for the outmoded 'Political Parties' trained individuals, relishing and brandishing these 3 traits will be needed to cut through the Gordian knot of the insoluble political drift we have today. We must remember the tenets of evolution and that change is not always progressive or better. To advance the human species needs change and conflicting ideas. These are necessary—not lobby groups, supine presidents and empty suits.

Upon the scarred field of politics Churchill stressed strength and magnanimity as the cornerstones of his behaviour. If impatience was his great weakness than offering magnanimity to the defeated—whether a local political opponent or Germany after World War II—casted Churchill as a strong but gallant knight and a man raised above the normal dash and din of political conflict. He fought all battles with limitless reserve and strategy. He offered friend and foe alike illimitable goodwill and respect after the conflict. His ideals imbued with history and coupled with a vision of where his country should be in the world were marked by a sense of fair play. Principles and not parties dictated his actions. For these reasons he is a man to be honoured and acclaimed as a defendant of democratic right and privilege.

To be effective statesmanship must lay on established principles and constraints rather than on emotive impulses and frayed passions. We should not forget that

nations have no permanent friends, only semi-permanent interests, a covenant that often offends popular sympathy and belief.⁴² For it is these realism's, that politics is a game of shifting fortunes, relationships and situations, that disgusts the great majority in democratic lands. Politics is like making love—natural, necessary and enjoyable—only if it is done properly. What is discernible about Churchill is his hard-headed realism and practicality in accepting such truths. Consequently he looked ahead a great deal more carefully and cautiously than many of his contemporary observers, mutating his viewpoints and re-evaluating some of his opinions.⁴³ Of course some cried that he was too fluid and perhaps could not be trusted and other critics weary of Churchill's rhetoric would delight in emphasising that Churchill was a product of the late 19th century—immutable and out of date.⁴⁴ Thus from both sides—conservatives and liberals—Churchill received a drubbing, regardless of the integrity of his actions.

Churchill's bellicosity caused much of the drubbing. One should consider the weight and purity of Churchill's virtue and charity to all he contacted—friend or foe—even though he received the most acidic and heavily concentrated attacks of any politician in any era. Critics never tired of chopping at the tree of Churchill's accomplishments. It began when he crossed the floor in 1904 to join the liberals. It received a great accretion in strength during the winter of 1913-4 when Churchill was the subject of a broad protest by pacifists, economists, and social reformers who thought that as First Lord of the Admiralty he was too profligate and was promoting the arms race. At the root of the discontent and many to follow, was the fact that Churchill was not a good party man.⁴⁵ As such the image of the war mongering privateer was born and created by an aspersive socialist press. Churchill was not a war monger, "his thought has always been, between the wars, upon the means of making peace among the peoples."⁴⁶ For his critics such distractions were carefully ignored. It was during 1913-14 that the apparatus to hang Churchill politically was established and raised for action.

What is inestimable is the fortitude and resilience of mind and body to withstand such brutal, crabby treatment that Churchill received at the hands of malcontents and frustrated plotters. His closest friends recognised clearly the political courage of Churchill. On November 11 1922, T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia), wrote to a friend; "The man is as brave as six, as good-humoured, shrewd, self-confident and considerate as a statesman can be and several times I've seen him chuck the statesmanship course and do the honest thing instead."⁴⁷

The honest thing included enacting proper change. When we view the broad balance of Churchill's career and factor in the jealousy inherent in the political field and the degree of envy held by many of Churchill's excessive successes we observe that many of his greatest contributions to the establishment of public welfare and governmental responsibility were initiatives driven from within, without concern to reputation, personal circumstance or fortune. Most were decidedly modern and far sighted. This is quite clear in his advancement of 'Tory Representative democracy'—

economic growth with general support for the masses. Tory Representative democracy is another prescription for centrist governance. Often times this led him to advocate the dismemberment of party politics and the establishment of broad nationally based governance: "Parliamentary debate has become largely meaningless. All the time the two great party machines are grinding up against each other with the utmost energy, dividing every village, every street, every town and city into busy party camps. Each party argues that it is the fault of the other. What is certain is that to prolong the process indefinitely is the loss of all . . . Once it can be seen that a great new situation or great new issues lie before us, an appeal should be made to the people to create some governing force which can deal with our affairs in the name and in the interest of the large majority of the nation."⁴⁸

Part of Churchill's trajectory to statesmanship can be seen more clearly when looking a timeline of skills and self-improvement. First accumulate a reputation for outspoken principled action. Second accumulate power via alliances, learning and public positioning. Then state a vision resplendent with clear principles, meanings and images while solving local problems. Lastly accede to great affairs and the devising of solutions in a national and international context. This trajectory needs to be buttressed by character, skills (verbal and technical), vision and power accumulation and recognition. To have these skills imbedded in action is not enough. A person must also have as a bedrock a clear and clean sense of duty and morality.

Importantly Churchill was clean. Adultery, conspiracy, or treachery was never a part of Churchill's character. Loyalty, aggression and impulsiveness were the main exciting agents in Churchill's life. His extreme ambition bordering at times on foolhardiness but always driven by an abnormal energy galvanised all around him. Churchill was always a contrarian thinker, and a statesman of the highest order, but he was not a Machiavellian posturer. His success rested on energy, innovation and positive thinking, all in a consistent framework employed in over 50 years of statesmanship.

Skills

Churchill personified the well instructed and knowledgeable leader. He was a self-developed man. As a youth he immersed himself in governing, leadership and policy. He never ceased learning and improving all of his life. He spent a great deal of time learning skills from his contemporaries such as Lloyd George, Lord Fisher, Herbert Asquith, F.E. Smith, and Max Beaverbrook amongst many others. On a political level this education led to a vision not only of strong morality but of rationality. In very few instances did Churchill compromise his personal code of morality for the sake of political gain. In this he was exemplary. But he was also a realist. He was adept at combining power and ethics in a compelling package. Very few understood the effective use of political leverage better than Churchill.

Compare Churchill's self-education program with the political elite today. How many are steeped in history, philosophy, and the rigours and tribulations of historical notables? What percent of our esteemed political masters exhibit such a rounded appreciation of the conditions and matters that shaped and will continue to shape the human story? As Churchill sourly commented to then Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin in 1928 concerning the ease with which World War One could have been avoided: "Think of these people, decent, educated, the story of the past laid out before them. What to avoid, what to do etc. Patriotic, loyal, clean—trying their utmost. What a ghastly muddle they made of it! Unteachable from infancy to tomb—there is the first & main characteristic of mankind."⁴⁹

In looking at his life nothing can sum up the traits and skills of Churchill in short pleasing verbiage. He was patently too many people, a definite renaissance man, engaging in politics, writing, reporting, painting, farming, hunting, polo playing, warring and investing.⁵⁰ Besides a massive intellect and memory Churchill possessed a spirit spurred with the whips of energy. It was unrelenting. His was the creed of action and contempt for delay. Mission was founded and achieved by exploring, questioning, trying, failing and trying again. During the 1930's when the Stanley Baldwin and Ramsay Macdonald governments neglected the build-up of British war making strength and sought the treacherous path of appeasement to satiate the Nazi beast, Churchill who had long criticised the insipidity of such a program exclaimed in 1936 the memorable words about Baldwin's government revealing his contempt for hiding inactivity in political closets; "The government simply cannot make up their mind, or they cannot get the Prime Minister to make up his mind. So they go in strange paradox, decided only to be undecided, resolved to be irresolute, adamant for drift, solid for fluidity, all powerful to be impotent."⁵¹

Brilliant diction summing up the most hated of Churchill's dislikes—inaction. But we have still to reach that quality in Churchill, which warrants us in calling him great. For a man may be gifted far above the ordinary, without earning the emblem of true greatness. Churchill had brilliant gifts. He was, in addition, driven by a limitless, borderless, shifting, resolute ambition. Without such magnificent ambition, men never have, and never will accede to the summit of power, prestige and greatness. "Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise (that last infirmity of noble mind), To scorn delights, and live laborious days."⁵²

But unseemly ambition is insufficient to earn the appellation of great. It has to be elevated by noble principles ('that last infirmity of noble mind'), to allow a man to rise above the supine mass. Flaming pertinacity is dangerous without the fibre of moral strength. Credibility rests on the broad shoulders of honesty and reliability. No leader can shrug off those characteristics of success. Genius and energy do not necessarily shape the epiphanies of leadership. They have to be combined in harmony and strength with the skills and qualities that we discussed in the last chapter, and which illuminate true leadership.