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Churchill's Generals

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collectivized agriculture, accelerated the growth of heavy industry, and exterminated not only his opponents but those who appeared capable of spontaneous behavior—all in his quest to forge revolutionary credentials equal to those of Karl Marx and V.I. Lenin.

Hitler directed his oratorical gift at the increasingly large and enthusiastic crowds and ultimately captured a following that could not be ignored. Not only did he blame the Weimar Republic for the suffering of the German people, but he promised to restore German glory with the Thousand Year Reich, once the Nazis were in power. The Nazi party garnered only 800,000 votes in 1928, but the Depression of 1929 raised their total count to 6.4 million in 1930, and in 1932 their total rose to 13.75 million. In January 1933, Hitler was co-opted into the government as chancellor, and by July the Nazis held a monopoly on political power.

It was power that permitted Hitler to accelerate Germany's capability to bear arms again (*Wiederwehrhaftmachung*), which was a necessary precondition for the pursuit of his racial millennium. The latter could be achieved only after the Jewish question was solved and the *Untermenschen* (Slavs) in Eastern Europe were made slaves of the newly settled Germans.

On 22 June 1941, Germany attacked the Soviet Union. On 31 July Hermann Göring ordered SS General Reinhard Heydrich to make the necessary preparations for the "total solution of the Jewish question."

Bullock insists that "there was only one man among the Nazi leaders who could have conceived of so grandiose and bizarre a plan."

The Soviet Union's victory over Hitler's Germany ended one dreadful regime, only to allow Stalin's USSR to survive for almost forty years.

Bullock concludes that twentieth-century European history has been the story of Hitler and Stalin: the redefinition of boundaries in Europe; the massive scale of inhumanity; and the conflict of ideologies. Bullock states that when "war, revolution, or some other form of violent upheaval disrupts normality and continuity . . . it is possible for an individual to exert powerful, even a decisive influence on the way events develop." He is quite correct to conclude that, notwithstanding the social and economic dislocations that enabled these two tyrants to win power, "only later did it become clear how much difference it made who won."

WALTER C. UHLER
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Keegan, John, ed. *Churchill's Generals*.
New York: William Morrow,
1992. 368pp. \$13

Distinguished historian Martin Blumenson once described the U.S. commanders of World War II as the most formidable array of warriors in our history. The same can be said of Great Britain's military commanders. Ably edited by John Keegan, *Churchill's Generals* includes seventeen

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essays on twenty general officers who served Churchill "at the supreme crisis in the nation's life." Contributors include such notable historians as Barrie Pitt, Kenneth Macksey, Sir Douglas Fraser, and Brian Bond. The result is a superb collection of essays that examine the successes and failures of Britain's senior army commanders. A complete bibliography and detailed chronology follow each essay.

At the core of this work is Winston Churchill, the prime minister and minister of defense, whom the editor describes as a "frustrated Marlborough yearning to be a general in the field of battle and the presiding genius of the Grand Alliance." Churchill was still minister of defense in 1945, the longest-surviving of all Hitler's Western opponents and perhaps the most implacable and successful of his foes. Keegan views Churchill as a brilliant leader who perceived his country's war-making power as essentially amphibian but recognized that war in modern society was basically attritional in nature. The tension between these two forces dominated Churchill's direction of operations and his appointment of military commanders.

A review of each biographical essay reveals a common thread in Churchill's commanders. All were similar in age, background, education, training, and experience. Most were born in the 1880s, and, almost without exception, they were either products of the Royal Military College in Sandhurst or the Royal Military Academy in Woolwich. All

but Field Marshal William Slim attended public schools; none had been to university. Most were either infantrymen or artillerymen, a notable change from World War I, when cavalrymen tended to dominate the senior ranks. Many had served as staff officers, and the majority had fought in the trenches during the Great War. Few had any experience in joint operations.

What makes this anthology so valuable is the balanced assessment of each of the commanders. For example, Montgomery emerges as the general who gave Churchill the victories that he and the nation sorely needed, but Monty was also a commander who made serious errors, such as the decision to launch Operation Market Garden. Alan Brooke is the most influential chief of the Imperial General Staff ever produced by the British army, but he was also ever resentful of Churchill's constant interference in operational matters.

Other commanders, including Field Marshals Earl Alexander and Sir Claude Auchinleck, receive their criticisms and praises for their failures and successes. Still others, like Generals Sir Adrian Carton de Wiart and Sir Louis Spears, enjoyed the fullest confidence of Churchill but were unable to fulfill the high expectations of senior positions to which they were appointed but were not entirely suited. Two commanders, Orde Wingate and Sir John Dill, failed to survive the war. One, Arthur Percival, spent the majority of the war as a Japanese prisoner of war.

In summary, *Churchill's Generals* is the most comprehensive examination of the army commanders who helped Churchill win World War II. Written predominantly from a British perspective and reflecting a strong national bias, the book provides an intimate portrait of Britain's senior military commanders during the most devastating war of the twentieth century.

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Townsend, Peter. *Duel of Eagles*.
Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press,
1991. 455pp. \$24.95

This is one of the best histories written about the Battle of Britain. It was crafted from the experiences of Peter Townsend, commander of Britain's 85 Fighter Squadron and a participant in that battle. Despite his emphasis on air power, the author has provided a remarkable blend of history, technology, ideology, and personality. Townsend's love of flying emerges throughout the work, which is punctuated with humor, horror, determination, despair, professionalism, and pragmatism. He has managed to capture the spirit of both the war and the warrior.

Townsend believes that though the war was fought by brave and courageous men, it was an unnecessary continuation of World War I, brought on by the debacle at Ver-

One of the unique things about this book is the German viewpoint provided through interviews of former German pilots, war documents, and letters. The author leaves no doubt about why the Germans lost the Battle of Britain. First and foremost, he blames poor leadership. He contrasts the visionaries in the German air force with their incompetent leaders and the leadership's failure to match doctrine to technology. As an example he refers to the German order for Me 109s to escort bombers, despite the fact that they did not have the combat range to be effective in that role. A combination of poor intelligence and competing wartime priorities led to inconsistent guidance and the failure to identify the Royal Air Force fighter squadrons and their ground control network. Ultimately, it was incongruent strategy and uncoordinated efforts that led to the downfall of the Germans.

Townsend excels in his discussion of the Royal Air Force. His fascinating narratives about men like Trenchard and Churchill provide the reader with clues about what the author believes to be the key to victory in the Battle of Britain. Included are discussions about the morality of bombing, the efficacy of air power, and interservice cooperation, which are dynamic excursions along the road to the battle. Indeed, reading about the buildup phase is so compelling that the battle itself is a bit anticlimactic.

Readers who enjoy firsthand accounts of dogfights (sadly, without the accompanying hand gestures) will