

● REVIEWS ●

"The Hinge of Fate"

*Mr. Churchill's Fourth Volume*

By FRANCIS NEILSON

THE FOURTH VOLUME of Mr. Churchill's story of the Second World War is a revelation of lack of preparation and co-operation, bewilderment, and home-made strategy far removed from scenes of action. Long-distance directions to commanders in the field, cross purposes brought about by unexpected reverses, miscalculations of enemy forces and their equipment were almost everyday dilemmas that harassed the chiefs in London and Washington. In rendering account of these misfortunes, Churchill, sometimes with unusual candor, spares neither himself nor his staffs. Yet, the whole story is not told in "The Hinge of Fate." It is now easy to fill in the omissions—some of them of striking importance—which are lacking in his narrative.

It would take another volume, quite as long as the fourth, to present the parts of the story that he overlooks. Much may be found in the dispatches of the leading correspondents on the spot, and it would be interesting, if such a feat could be accomplished, to give their accounts of what took place and compare them with Mr. Churchill's story.

The amount of space taken up in this volume with communications to commanders and their replies to the British Prime Minister is so excessive that the wonder is the reader gets as much as he does in the way of other comment from the writer. The great drawback to a work of this type is the multiplication of unnecessary instruction which passed between the author and his correspondents. How he found time in those distressing days to compose long memoranda, and equally long dispatches, to persons placed in so many different parts of the world is a conundrum. Still, he was never known to shirk work, and writing, I suppose, comes as easily to him as flight to a bird. The long telegrams to Curtin, Prime Minister of Australia, to Wavell, to Auchinleck, reveal a tenacity of literary effort that can scarcely be matched by any statesman.

His messages to Roosevelt must have kept the radio operators busy from morning till night. Such a bombardment of literature was never let loose in a war before. To all this industry must be added the onerous business

of flying here and there, to take a glimpse of what was going on near the fields of action. The fearful risks that he ran at sea and in the air indicate an indefatigable courage and a tenacity of purpose that has never been excelled. Hannibal and Genghis Khan would have suffered attacks of nervous debility had it been possible for them to attempt half the exertions our author imposed upon himself.

#### Churchill's Moral Impedimenta

IT MAY BE ASSUMED that in all these strenuous excursions, his personal traveling gear was light. However, his notions of moral courage must have weighed heavily upon him in many of the strange circumstances in which he realized they had to be jettisoned to make room for expedient considerations.

These Cinderellas of civilization were often left at the cheerless hearth while the ugly sisters, Necessity and Expedience, were favored by the opportunists. One of many instances of this is as follows:

When I was at Washington on the morrow of the American entry into the war, and Mr. Eden had reported the wishes of the Soviet Government to absorb the Baltic States, I had reacted unfavourably, as the telegrams already printed show. But now, three months later, under the pressure of events, I did not feel that this moral position could be physically maintained. In a deadly struggle it is not right to assume more burdens than those who are fighting for a great cause can bear ("The Hinge of Fate," p. 327). . . .

To add the baggage of morals to the impedimenta of war is not exercising the wisdom of the serpent, nor is it becoming, in those who imagine that battles are fought to save lives, to find excuses for dispensing with morals when it is convenient to bow to necessity. For she knows no law, tacit or written, and the war manuals of the great States make this plain in the instructions written for commanders in the field. War is such a turmoil of exceptional conditions and incidents, unpredictable and often immediate, that no one yet has been able to foretell, much less foresee, how its course will run or what rules, *without exceptions*, can be devised to meet the problems of its awful shocks and startling surprises. Neither Alexander nor Caesar, on their campaigns, took with them unnecessary baggage. The former left Aristotle behind at Athens, and the Roman found no place for Cicero in his legions.

Although the military manuals permit exception to be made in many cases by generals and their officers, war is still war, and must be waged according to the necessities of combat. Soldiers know that morals are not

bullets and never yet won a battle. However, it is quite a different matter with statesmen. Churchill will never qualify as a political or military moralist. So great a part of his life has been given to warfare that it is not to be expected, even by his closest friends, that in the extremities of a battle, his notion of what is moral should transcend the quality of the action called for in an emergency.

Two of the most interesting sections in "The Hinge of Fate" are those that deal with the campaigns in the desert against Rommel, and the fall of Singapore. Here we find miscalculation of an order that is unbelievably stupid. In the first case, the dispatches that passed between Churchill and his generals in command in Africa reveal the difficulties of estimating the task before the battle is joined. He admits that it is one of the mysteries of that campaign how the Germans succeeded in crossing the Mediterranean, in strong force and with heavy equipment, to bolster the defeated Italian army.

His story, told in the fourth volume, of the disasters in northern Africa will not satisfy the historians in the days to come. They will want to know why blunder followed blunder, each one causing a fearful loss of life and equipment hard to replace. The accounts of the trials and tribulations of General Wavell have been discussed in other volumes. Some of the omissions in Churchill's book, with regard to the change in command, are severely criticized.

However, there is a lot that has not been told about the conduct of the war in the desert. "The Hinge of Fate" leaves much to the imagination of the reader, and more to be explained by future recorders. I expected him to revert to his third volume, and deal with the major blunder, which was the primary cause of so many of the disasters that followed.

#### The Strategic Importance of Pantelleria

IN "THE GRAND ALLIANCE," he tells us that from the beginning of January, 1941, he expected German air power would find a base in Sicily and become a menace to Malta. He says:

. . . I also feared they would set up an air station on Pantelleria, with all the facilities this would give for a movement of German troops, presumably armoured, into Tripoli ("Grand Alliance," p. 28). . . .

But his Chiefs of Staff and the War Cabinet did not think it was necessary to occupy Pantelleria, and the question was overshadowed by "the menace to the Balkan States."

Further on, in "The Grand Alliance," he returns to the matter of the importance of Pantelleria, and with real Churchillian *élan*, he describes an operation that seemingly had no chance of being successfully achieved.

. . . In September, 1940, I had asked Admiral Keyes to make a plan for seizing Pantelleria with the newly formed commandos. The idea was to attach two or three troopships to the tail of one of our heavily guarded convoys. While the main body was engaging the enemy's attention these would drop off in the darkness and storm the island by surprise. The project, which was called "Workshop," gained increasing support from the Chiefs of Staff. . . .

In my circle we did not deem the actual capture too hard to try, but the difficulties of holding the prize while we were already hard pressed in Malta caused misgivings ("Grand Alliance," p. 57). . . .

However, plans were laid for the project, but other affairs intervened, and the undertaking was put off for a month. At a conference at Chequers, in January, the First Sea Lord and the other Chiefs of Staff discussed the matter, but Churchill "was constrained by the pressure of larger business, and also by talk about the commandos not being yet fully trained." He admits "the delay proved fatal to the plan."

All this took place in January, 1941. To me, it is one of the most difficult things to understand how affairs in the Balkans were reckoned of more importance than the probability of German troops from Sicily crossing the Mediterranean and landing on the north coast of Africa. In March, 1940, nine months before Churchill pondered the problem of Pantelleria, I wrote in the first volume of "The Tragedy of Europe," about the importance of this island:

. . . How strongly fortified the island is, no one seems to know, but that it is to be considered a tremendous factor, one cannot doubt. Lying somewhat to the southeast of it is the Island of Malta, where there is a naval yard for the British fleet. Should the war spread to the Mediterranean, and Italy come into it on the side of Germany, the waters between Pantelleria and Malta would indeed become a danger zone for the Allies (vol. I, p. 417).

Its position in the Mediterranean, between Sicily and Tunis, seemed to me a danger zone that could not possibly be overlooked by the naval chiefs of Great Britain. It was a mighty costly business shelving the matter, and going off at a tangent to the Aegean and the Balkans.

Lloyd George described the Norwegian campaign as "a series of incredible botcheries." What he would have said about the Pantelleria business might not have been strictly polite. To make good the omissions in

Churchill's accounts in "The Grand Alliance" and in "The Hinge of Fate," the reader should refer to "The Tragedy of Europe," if he desires to fill in the yawning gaps in these books.

Less than three months after Churchill and the Chiefs of Staff turned the Pantelleria operation down, the special writer of *The New York Times* of March 9, 1941, in a review of the battle territories, referring particularly to the surrender of Benghazi, asked why "secrecy shrouded the Army of the Nile? What had happened to it?" From his analysis of this mysterious affair, we learn that something had gone wrong because "large portions of it were transported to the Balkan front." Further on in the same review, he says:

... It was reported that 100,000 German soldiers and 1,000 German tanks were in Libya; against these the British were said to have 110,000 men and 500 mechanized units. London quickly belittled the Washington report, asserting that the tremendous quantity of shipping needed to transport and maintain such forces could not evade the Royal Navy's blockade of the Central Mediterranean (*Vide* "Tragedy of Europe," vol. II, p. 246). . . .

The fact was plain to me—the director of the forces had made two unforgivable blunders. The first was in not securing the central passages of the Mediterranean between Sicily and Tunisia. The other was weakening Wavell's army by sending part of it to Greece. I often wondered in those anxious days what the chiefs of the army and navy thought about this dreadful business. And now I wonder what they think of the story about it that is told in "The Hinge of Fate"!

Churchill telegraphed to Wavell March 26, 1941, saying he was "naturally concerned at rapid German advance." But, characteristically, he added, "I presume you are only waiting for the tortoise to stick his head out far enough before chopping it off" ("Grand Alliance," p. 202).

Wavell replied the next day, "I have to admit to having taken considerable risk in Cyrenaica after capture of Benghazi in order to provide maximum support for Greece." Further on in the same dispatch, he reports:

After we had accepted Greek liability evidence began to accumulate of German reinforcements to Tripoli, which were coupled with attacks on Malta which prevented bombing of Tripoli from there, on which I had counted. German air attacks on Benghazi, which prevented supply ships using harbour, also increased our difficulties ("Grand Alliance," p. 203).

Of course! What else could be expected? The director in London took on far too much, with far too little, to help in doing it. Never was a strategist so astonished at his own blunders. Early in April he communicated again with Wavell:

... I cannot understand how the enemy can have developed any considerable force at the end of this long, waterless coast road, and I cannot feel that there is at this moment a persistent weight behind his attack in Cyrenaica ("Grand Alliance," p. 204). . . .

The end of this part of the sad story is told by Churchill. He informs us:

... General Ismay, who was so close to me every day, has recorded the following: "All of us at the centre, including Wavell's particular friends and advisers, got the impression that he had been tremendously affected by the breach of his desert flank. His Intelligence had been at fault, and the sudden pounce came as a complete surprise. I seem to remember Eden saying that Wavell had 'aged ten years in the night.'" I am reminded of having commented: "Rommel has torn the new-won laurels from Wavell's brow and thrown them in the sand" ("Grand Alliance," pp. 344-5).

Long-distance strategy had failed to turn the trick in northern Africa, and as a consequence someone had to suffer for the blunders. In June, 1941, Churchill wrote to Wavell saying:

I have come to the conclusion that the public interest will best be served by the appointment of General Auchinleck to relieve you in the command of the armies of the Middle East" ("Grand Alliance," pp. 345-6).

A job was found for Wavell in India, and, soldier-like, he bowed his head to the storm, and said, "The Prime Minister is quite right."

In the midst of all these narratives of disaster, it is rather amusing to find Mr. Churchill a caustic critic of the military deficiencies of others. In dealing with the complications in the Balkans and the action of Russia, he says:

... We have hitherto rated them as selfish calculators. In this period they were proved simpletons as well. The force, the mass, the bravery and endurance of Mother Russia had still to be thrown into the scales. But so far as strategy, policy, foresight, competence are arbiters, Stalin and his commissars showed themselves at this moment the most completely outwitted bunglers of the Second World War ("Grand Alliance," p. 353).

It would be interesting to know what Stalin and Molotov thought about the blunders that had been made in the Mediterranean, for these affected all the plans that had been devised concerning Greece, the Balkans, and indeed, the whole of the Middle East.

Our author is singularly brief about the battle of Cape Matapan and its consequences. If Pantelleria had been dealt with, and the Balkan business shelved, the African campaigns might have terminated before the autumn of 1941, and Churchill would have been spared the labor of recounting

more disasters, repeated until the last battle of El Alamein, which was brought to a finish in December, 1942.

At the beginning of the year, 1941, when he considered the possibility of attacking Pantelleria, there were two alternatives that called for an immediate decision. The first was the Mediterranean, where Great Britain was heavily engaged. The other was the Balkans. In the latter case, the Dill-Eden mission failed completely.

Already Russia and Germany were prepared for a swift descent upon Danubian territories. It was recognized then by American correspondents that there were too many irons in the fire for the blacksmith to hammer them into shape on one anvil. To attempt to deal with both problems it was necessary to divide his forces, and this was done and affected the success of both plans. The attempt to penetrate the soft underbelly of the whale, in the Balkans, proved that it had the tough hide of a rhinoceros, and the weakening of the force in northern Africa gave the Nazis the opportunity to send reinforcements to the Italians, which caused incalculable damage.

The long period covered in "The Grand Alliance" and in "The Hinge of Fate" by the story of the fighting in northern Africa takes up hundreds of pages. And, yet, for one who followed closely, day by day, the progress of the events, there is much that is overlooked that is of great importance to the historian. It would be unjust to say that Churchill has neglected to tell us not only what we knew at that time, but what has been recorded since in many works, because it would not redound to his credit. It may be that, in writing the last two volumes, he was over-conscious that space and paper have a limit, and a book running to 1,000 pages is a pretty big dose to give any reader. Still, much has to be explained about many of these campaigns.

#### **The Debâcle at Singapore**

IT IS THE SAME with his account of the Japanese attack in Polynesia. However, what he does deal with, he treats with candor and makes no excuses. I do not remember reading a more pathetic confession than this:

All that I had seen or read of war had led me to the conviction that, having regard to modern fire-power, a few weeks will suffice to create strong field defences, and also to limit and canalise the enemy's front of attack by mine-fields and other obstructions. Moreover, it had never entered into my head that no circle of detached forts of a permanent character protected the rear of the famous fortress. I cannot understand how it was I did not know this. But none of the officers on the spot and none of my professional advisers at home seem to have realised this awful

need. At any rate, none of them pointed it out to me—not even those who saw my telegrams based upon the false assumption that a regular siege would be required. . . . I had put my faith in the enemy being compelled to use artillery on a very large scale in order to pulverise our strong points at Singapore, and in the almost prohibitive difficulties and long delays which would impede such an artillery concentration and the gathering of ammunition along Malayan communications. Now, suddenly, all this vanished away and I saw before me the hideous spectacle of the almost naked island and of the wearied, if not exhausted, troops retreating upon it.

I do not write this in any way to excuse myself. I ought to have known. My advisers ought to have known and I ought to have been told, and I ought to have asked. The reason I had not asked about this matter, amid the thousands of questions I put, was that the possibility of Singapore having no landward defences no more entered into my mind than that of a battleship being launched without a bottom ("Hinge of Fate," p. 49). . . .

How on earth a man in London could be expected to direct naval and land operations at the southeastern tip of the Malay Peninsula is something no informed critic has been able to understand. Napoleon had no one in Paris directing him what to do; and certainly Moltke relied on no one in Berlin telling him what the enemy might do. I am no strategist, and know scarcely anything about the technique of warfare, but I have gathered from books written by soldiers and sailors, who have had to bear the brunt of fighting the enemy, that it is hard to tell from one hour to another what will take place when the cannons roar. The man in action cannot be governed by someone thousands of miles away. He has to make quick decisions, and these decisions depend on what the enemy is doing to him at the moment.

Now much has been written about the Japanese descent upon the Strait of Karimata. Within a few days after the disaster at Pearl Harbor, two British battleships, half a mile apart, were sunk, within nine minutes of each other. The same day this report reached the United States, it was announced that the Japanese landed invasion forces 150 miles north of Singapore. *The Times* of December 8, 1941, came to my hand on New Year's Day. The chief editorial was headed "Japan Strikes," and an article on the editorial page from a special correspondent at Singapore was entitled "Singapore Prepared." The editorial read:

. . . The presence in Malayan waters of the *Prince of Wales* and her consorts is proof that Mr. Churchill's recent pledge to the United States was no empty assurance, and Australia, New Zealand, and the Netherlands East Indies, whose united forces make a formidable total, have shown



plainly enough where they stand (*Vide* "Tragedy of Europe," vol. III, p. 47).

The last paragraph of the special article is as follows:

Singapore's significance can perhaps best be appreciated if the hypothetical question is asked: What would happen supposing it fell to the enemy? The answer is obvious. Neither the British nor American navies could operate in the western Pacific since they would have no base from which to operate. Even Australia, it must be remembered, has no graving-dock large enough for a capital ship. India, Australia, New Zealand, to say nothing of Malaya and the Indies, would lie wide open to the invader. With Singapore stand and fall the destinies, not of countries only, but of whole continents ("Tragedy of Europe," vol. III, p. 47).

The embargo on scrap iron was an uncalled-for provocation, and was ordered far too late to serve any effective purpose. It extended, indeed widened, the spheres of contention. As early as September 28, 1940, I wrote in "The Tragedy of Europe":

It is grave news for us, but for Great Britain and her possessions in the East Indies it is perilous. If the Japanese occupy French Indo-China, they will be able to make bases which will threaten Singapore, for it is less than eight hundred miles from that port to Saïgon, and less than two thousand miles from Haiphong to the Straits of Malacca. No doubt, the Japanese navy is in the China Sea. Before the United States navy could have the slightest chance of assisting Great Britain, Japan would be in a position to attack the British possessions of the Malay Peninsula (vol. I, p. 629).

As it was with the American naval authorities in Washington and at Pearl Harbor, so it was with the British in London and Singapore. There had been warnings enough, but, like those that came to us before Japan struck, they went unheeded, or were not fully appreciated, by the commander of the forces at Downing Street. Again there was not only miscalculation as to what Japan would do; there was also grave underestimation of the strength of her force.

I suppose to some romantic people it seems all right to think that enormous tasks should be faced "with a handful of men," but it is not wise to cultivate in a daydream the exploits of *Excelsior*. However, it is true that Churchill was mighty skeptical about drawing Japan into the war until the European business was dealt with thoroughly. It was just in this quandary that he observed the wide difference of opinion held in Washington and in London. Still, there was really no other practical way for Roosevelt to make a declaration of war. He had been elected as an isolationist. Between 70 and 80 per cent of the American people, according to the polls, were against intervention in Europe. London

had the war on its doorstep; Washington was far removed from it, having the Atlantic on the east and the Pacific on the west. Small wonder there were differences of opinion as to which was the first job to deal with!

It is only necessary to read the correspondence that passed between John Curtin, Prime Minister of Australia, and Mr. Churchill to appreciate the tremendous complexities of opinion and endeavor that arose so soon after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Curtin reminded him that "The whole internal defense system of Australia was based on the integrity of Singapore and the presence of a capital fleet there." Churchill had complained about the severe criticism that was brought into play concerning the deficiencies of the defense of Polynesia, and Curtin told him:

My observations on Crete and Greece imply no censure on you, nor am I passing judgment on anyone, but there is no denying the fact that air support was not on the scale promised. . . . I have stated this position frankly to the Australian people because I believe it is better that they should know the facts than assume that all is well and later be disillusioned by the truth.

No one has a great admiration for the magnificent efforts of the people of the United Kingdom than their kinsfolk in Australia. Nevertheless, we make no apologies for our efforts, or even for what you argue we are not doing. The various parts of the Empire, as you know, are differently situated, possess various resources, and have their own peculiar problems ("Hinge of Fate," p. 14).

The imperial difficulties Churchill had to contend with were very grave. So were those of the Athenians, and some of the passages in Thucydides refer to problems of empire that are strikingly similar to those with which the Prime Minister had to deal. The Far Eastern bedfellow of Britain in the First World War was a very uncomfortable pillow-mate when the second one began.

Who would have dreamed, when Hitler attacked Poland, that the war would spread to Polynesia, and that the colonies of the Netherlands would be ravaged by the Japanese? I find in "The Tragedy of Europe" a warning note that I wrote on September 27, 1940, about the embargo put on scrap iron by the Washington authorities. It is somewhat prophetic. Moreover, I had said a short time before that the European war might become a Eurasian one:

The embargo on scrap-iron has come years too late; it is announced when relations with Japan have almost reached the breaking point. It is to be hoped that the consequences of this action have been taken into consideration by the State Department. Will it mean a Japanese descent upon the Dutch East Indies? Shall we hear in a few months that the

Tokyo Government has placed an embargo upon rubber? There are many other commodities produced in the East Indies which we use ("The Tragedy of Europe," vol. I, p. 628).

War then threatened to embroil all the continents but the Western Hemisphere, and the reflections that came to those who thought initially it would be a simple business, when the pledge was made to support Poland, must have been gloomy in the extreme. That pledge set the world on fire, and owing to it, millions of lives were sacrificed, with the result that, as I predicted, Stalin was the victor in the end.

#### The American Invasion of Morocco

IN BOOK TWO, entitled "Africa Redeemed," we do not find a sentence that enlightens us about the aggression of the American forces, when Eisenhower landed his troops in Morocco and Algiers. Churchill describes the battles that took place and the arrangements made with Darlan. He does not tell us how the invasion was brought about or by what methods an ally was overcome. As it was at Oran, when he gave orders to attack the French fleet, so it was when American troops attacked the French on the west coast of Morocco. For an example of the conflict between moral considerations, and the necessity of taking every advantage of the enemy, it would be difficult to find one that can be compared with this desperate adventure.

Soldiers are not to blame for the actions of their ministerial chiefs. Political commanders-in-chief have their own way of doing things, when it is a business of saving lives, and it seems not to matter to them how many are sacrificed for the purpose. Historians will find the real reasons given for this unprovoked attack far more interesting than Mr. Churchill's description of the fighting. But to understand it clearly, they will have to search back to the dispatches sent early in November, 1942. At nine o'clock in the evening of November 7, an announcement was made by the White House that an American Expeditionary Force had invaded the French colonies at points on the Atlantic and the Mediterranean coasts. The pretext for the attack was as follows:

To forestall an Axis invasion there which "would constitute a direct threat to America across the comparatively narrow sea from western Africa."

To provide "an effective second front assistance to our heroic allies in Russia" ("Tragedy of Europe," vol. III, p. 364).

Now the moralists who sat upon the bench at Nuremberg ignored this case of aggression because they were not interested in aggression in gen-

eral; they were only concerned with aggression committed by an enemy State. In this case there was no declaration of war made either by the commander of the forces in Washington or by the Prime Minister of Great Britain.

When the White House announcement was made, there was an extraordinary revulsion of feeling in this country. Even some of my interventionist friends were amazed at what had been done. The preposterous excuses given by Roosevelt were commented upon severely. When the proclamation of General Eisenhower was published, many thinking people wondered why there had been so much fuss about Hitler invading Austria and going to Prague. To the French colonists, Eisenhower announced:

I have given formal orders that no offensive action shall be undertaken against you on condition that for your part you take the same attitude.

Then follows a declaration which could only have been issued by a provoked commander to an actual foe. He stated: "Any refusal to follow them will be interpreted as a proof of hostile intention on your part."

Having issued his astonishing commands, which have no precedent, he said:

We come, I repeat, as friends, not as enemies. We shall not be the first to fire. Follow exactly the orders which I have just given you. Thus, you will avoid any possibility of a conflict which could only be useful to our enemies (*Vide* "Tragedy of Europe," vol. III, p. 365). . . .

Here is a case of aggression that might be examined as a precedent by the bewildered delegates at Lake Success who have been considering the Korean affair. It is, however, only one of many the Western Allies perpetrated during the war.

This was a disastrous beginning to the assistance to be given to the hard-pressed British Empire forces in the desert. Long months had to pass before complete relief came with victory in May, 1942.

#### The Darlan Affair

THERE IS MUCH SPACE given in "The Hinge of Fate" to the Darlan affair. Here, again, the problem of considering morals, when military necessity must have priority, is revealed in many startling passages. And now that much of the tragedy is forgotten, it is amusing to learn how convenient it was to adopt Quislings, no matter with what contempt they were regarded by those ready to use them. The following is instructive:

On November 13 General Eisenhower flew from Gibraltar to Algiers to take the responsibility for the bargain which Clark had just made

with Darlan and assume direct control. The Allied commanders and officials on the spot were unanimous that Darlan was the only Frenchman who could rally Northwest Africa to the Allies. Giraud, whose power to command French allegiance was already exposed as a myth, had offered to work with Darlan when he heard of the German invasion of Unoccupied France. Darlan's authority was proved by the obedience to his "cease fire" order at Oran, in Morocco, and throughout Algeria. A final and formal agreement was therefore signed between Darlan and Eisenhower on the same day. In London I thought that Eisenhower's action was overwhelmingly justified on military grounds. On November 14 I sent him the following message: "Anything for the battle, but the politics will have to be sorted out later on" ("Hinge of Fate," p. 631).

"Anything for the battle!" Why, then, be disturbed by a moral qualm? Pétain had said that he made peace with Hitler to save the French Empire, but this statement was ridiculed by the Allies. It is amazing when one thinks of what can be done by the Allies to save lives, and what the foe is not permitted to do under any consideration. His sins of commission deserve a hanging, but when similar ones are committed by the Allies, absolution is tendered, and they forgive themselves for their offenses.

The Darlan affair was one of the sensations of a sensational war, and Churchill quickly found out what his people in England thought about the business:

. . . I was grieved to find the success of our immense operation, and the victory of Alamein, overshadowed in the minds of many of my best friends by what seemed to them a base and squalid deal with one of our most bitter enemies. I considered their attitude unreasonable and not sufficiently considerate of the severities of the struggle and the lives of the troops. As their criticisms became sharper I grew resentful, and also somewhat contemptuous of their sense of proportion; but I understood what was troubling them and felt it myself ("Hinge of Fate," p. 632). . . .

Further on, in recording this disgraceful episode, he tells us that "passion ran high in England about the Darlan deal." It affected his friends "poignantly," and he confesses that "many of those with whom I was in closest mental and moral harmony were in extreme distress." He sought refuge in a Secret Session, and he admits that when he rose to address the House, he "began with some severe understatements." In the speech he put the burden of complaint upon Washington, and said:

The question which we must ask ourselves is not whether we like or do not like what is going on, but what are we going to do about it.

In war it is not always possible to have everything go exactly as one likes. In working with allies it sometimes happens that they develop opinions of their own ("Hinge of Fate," p. 638). . . .

In dealing with the matter of "a peculiar form of French mentality," he told the Commons, "The Almighty in His infinite wisdom did not see fit to create Frenchmen in the image of Englishmen." The House would have been most interested to learn from him what Frenchmen were then thinking of their former Allies.

#### Loss of Confidence in Churchill

AN UTTERLY FALSE IMPRESSION will surely be imposed upon American readers by Churchill's description of how he silenced the opposition to his policy and brought about a better feeling in the country. It was not difficult for him, in a Secret Session, to overcome the opposition, for he knew perfectly well that it was only necessary to call for a vote of censure to yield a big majority in his favor. He also knew there was no one else to undertake the job.

As for reassuring the people of the country, every by-election that took place, from this time on to the end of the war, told him distinctly that he was steadily losing support. Only 30 per cent of the registered voters were going to the polls, and his candidates, when they were elected, suffered severely reduced majorities; in several cases, they were beaten. The country was certainly not with him.

I record in "The Tragedy of Europe" the figures of the by-elections which took place before and after the Secret Session. The results do not justify Churchill's claims. In commenting upon the result of these elections, editors of newspapers were by no means convinced that the country was with the Prime Minister. After the Eddisbury by-election, when a Commonwealth candidate was returned, *The Times* said: "Whatever combination of factors contributed to the result, the parties represented in the government have been given cause for serious thought."

The big drop in the Conservative poll, to say nothing of the defeat of Churchill's candidates, in several cases, convinced me that at a general election the Government's majority would be wiped out.

For us who are today threatened with a Third World War, increased burdens of taxation, and sinister inflation, it is necessary to learn how we have been brought to this dreadful pass. Only by surveying the moves by which Washington and London blundered into the position of making Stalin a world menace shall we learn how our future is now menaced.

There are more fears, suspicions, and uncertainties afflicting people today than at any time since Pearl Harbor. All our woes abroad, and most of our distresses at home, can be traced to the senseless actions of men who never once realized the consequences of their personal designs.

Critics of repute, with no ax to grind, remind us of the Casablanca, Cairo, Teheran, and Yalta secret agreements, but these are not all of the blunders that were committed, by any means. "The Hinge of Fate" is a startling revelation of almost innumerable stratagems that paved the way to the conferences at which we were betrayed by our chiefs. Casablanca decisions meant the prolongation of the war, because of the unconditional-surrender announcement. Cairo gave false hope to Chiang Kai-shek. Teheran was a sordid bargain which assured Stalin of support, and convinced him that he would ultimately be the master of Central Europe. Yalta capped the climax of all this discreditable business, for we learned in August, 1945, that Moscow announced a thirty-year pact of friendship with the Chungking Government, with the result that "the Red flag was flying over all of Manchuria, Sakhalin, Korea, and two of the Kurile Islands."

We are now paying for the consequences, and our humiliation is bitter. The desire of Roosevelt to "baby Stalin along," and Churchill's reluctant concurrence with what was done, have now become a problem more terrible to solve than any that arose in the spring of 1939.

The worst of it is, there is scarcely any chance that these matters will receive the consideration they deserve from the taxpayers. The politicians hold us all in a vise, and seemingly they can do just what they like with us. Yet, it is rather futile, after all, to pick a politician here or there as a scapegoat. The democracies permitted them to do these things, and though we are now launched upon campaigns to check the spread of what is called Communism, the electors of Great Britain and of the United States still have the constitutional power to stop the rapid political descent to—bankruptcy.

*Port Washington, New York*

*Germany, 1947-49: The Story in Documents.* Edited by V. H. Cassidy and associates. Washington 25, D. C.: Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, March, 1950, 631 pp., \$3.25.

The story of American policy toward Germany and the corresponding developments within Germany during the period January 1947-September 1949 is recounted in the documents presented in this work. The preceding period is covered in earlier publications.