

The Horrible Truth About Winston Churchill

A recent film and media reviews are busy singing the praises of Winston Churchill. Peter Frost begs to differ

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George W. Bush installed a bust of Winston Churchill in the Oval Office at the White House. When Barack Obama came to power he had the bust returned to Britain.

Obama's Kenyan grandfather, Hussein Onyango Obama, was imprisoned in one of the concentration camps Churchill and his imperialists had invented.

Churchill was born in 1874 into a Britain that was painting huge areas of the world map bloody red.

Just three years later Victoria crowned herself Empress of India, and the rape and pillage that would mark Britain's advance across Africa and much more of the globe moved up a gear.

At Harrow School and then Sandhurst the young Winston learnt the simple message: the superior white man was conquering the primitive, dark-skinned natives, and bringing them the benefits of Christian civilisation.

Kenyan leader Jomo Kenyatta and later Archbishop Desmond Tutu would sum it up in a beautiful single paragraph.

"When the British missionaries arrived, we Africans had the land and the minerals and the missionaries had the Bible. They taught us how to pray with our eyes closed. When we opened them, they had the land and we had the Bible."

As soon as he could, Churchill charged off to take his part in these various barbarous and criminal adventures. He described them as "a lot of jolly little wars against barbarous peoples."

First came the Swat Valley, now part of Pakistan. Here he judged his enemy were merely "deranged jihadists" whose violence was explained by a "strong aboriginal propensity to kill."

He gladly took part in raids that laid waste to whole valleys, destroying houses and burning crops.

Next he popped up in Sudan, where he boasted that he personally shot at least three “savages.”

The young Churchill played his part enthusiastically in all kinds of imperial atrocities. When concentration camps were built in South Africa, for white Boers, he said they produced “the minimum of suffering.” The Boer death toll was in fact almost 28,000.

At least 115,000 black Africans were swept into British camps, where 14,000 died. Churchill wrote of his “irritation that kaffirs should be allowed to fire on white men.” By now he was an MP and demanding a rolling programme of more imperialist conquests.

“The Aryan stock is bound to triumph,” was his battle cry.

As home secretary in 1911 he brought the artillery on to the streets of east London in a heavy-handed battle to flush out Latvian anarchists in the siege of Sydney Street. Welsh miners have never forgotten his outrages against the Tonypandy miners.

As colonial secretary in the 1920s, he unleashed the notorious Black and Tan thugs on Ireland’s Catholic civilians. The Irish have never forgotten this cruelty.

When the Iraqis rebelled against British rule, Churchill said:

“I am strongly in favour of using poisoned gas against uncivilised tribes.”

Churchill, as we can see, was happy to be spokesman for brutal and brutish British imperialism. It seems Churchill was driven by a deep loathing of democracy for anyone other than God’s chosen race — the British.

This was clearest in his attitude to India. When Mahatma Gandhi launched his campaign of peaceful resistance, Churchill raged that

he “ought to be lain bound hand and foot at the gates of Delhi, and then trampled on by an enormous elephant with the new viceroy seated on its back.”

Churchill further announced:

“I hate Indians. They are a beastly people with a beastly religion.”

In 1943, a famine broke out in Bengal and up to three million people starved to death. He bluntly refused any aid, raging that it was the Indians’ own fault for “breeding like rabbits.”

In Kenya Churchill believed that the fertile highlands should be the exclusive preserve of the white settlers and approved the clearing out of the local “blackamoors.”

He saw the local Kikuyu as “brutish children.” When they rebelled under Churchill’s post-war premiership, some 150,000 of them were forced at gunpoint into detention camps.

He approved various kinds of torture, including electric shocks, whipping and shootings. Mau Mau suspects were burned and mutilated. Hussein Onyango Obama was just one who never truly recovered from the torture he endured.

As colonial secretary Churchill offered what he called the Holy Land to both the Jews and the Arabs — although he had racist contempt for both.

He jeered at the Palestinians as “barbaric hordes who ate little but camel dung,” while he was appalled that the Israelis “take it for granted that the local population will be cleared out to suit their convenience.”

After the war he was quick to invent the iron curtain as he started the cold war against his hated Bolsheviks despite the fact that they had been his greatest ally in defeating Hitler and his nazis.

When he was re-elected prime minister in the 1951 election he rapidly restarted various imperialist adventures. There was the so-called Malayan Emergency, Kenya and of course the Korean war.

Churchill hated communism at home and abroad. He was always a supporter of British intervention in the young Soviet state, declaring that Bolshevism must be “strangled in its cradle.”

He convinced his divided and loosely organised Cabinet to intervene despite strong opposition from Labour.

In the 1926 General Strike Churchill edited the government’s newspaper, the British Gazette, and used it to put forward his anti-union, anti-Labour, anti-socialist rantings.

He even recommended that the food convoys from the docks should be guarded by tanks, armoured cars and hidden machine guns.

There are far too many other reasons why this champion of all things reactionary simply doesn’t deserve the paeans of praise being heaped on him at the moment.

I’m sure our letters page would welcome your own particular favourites, but let me finish with one that really makes me smile.

Even his reputation as an outstanding orator was, it seems, based on a lie. We now know that many of Churchill’s most famous radio speeches of the war were delivered by an actor, Norman Shelley.

Shelley went on to be a big star on BBC Children’s Radio and as Colonel Danby in the Archers.

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