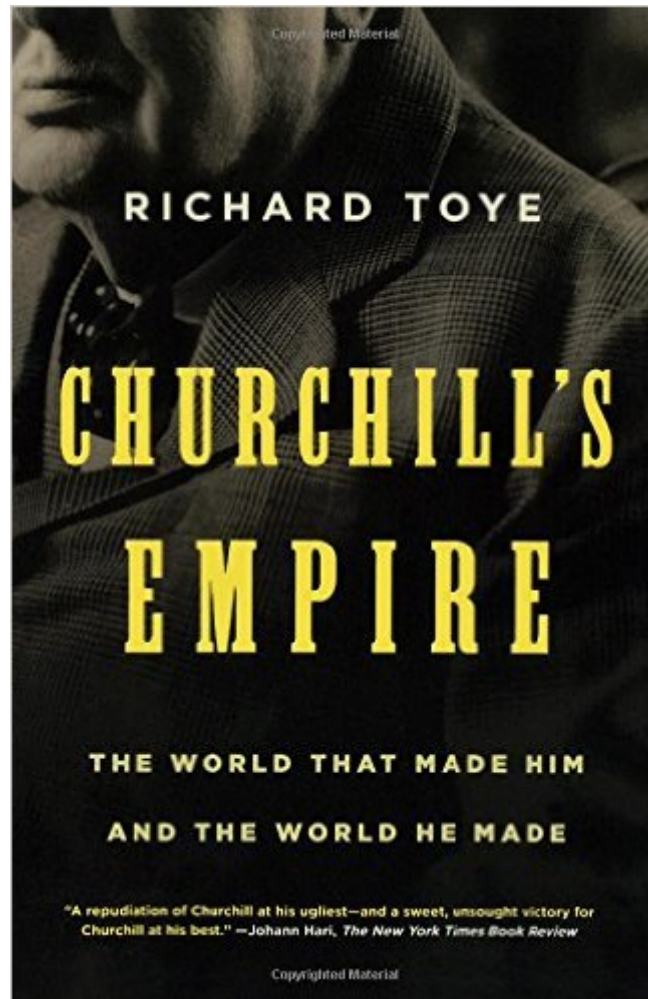


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Churchill's Empire: The World That Made Him And The World He Made



Synopsis

This is the first book to provide a comprehensive account of Churchill's lifelong involvement with the empire, from the early stages of his childhood that shaped his imperialist outlook to his emergence as a self-made hero. Instead of locating him on a left/right spectrum, Toye presents Churchill as a human being, a man whose imperialist outlook brought both acclaim and dread. Churchill was a powerful leader who believed in the strength of his race, but not necessarily the human race—he stood alone against Hitler, but he was also an imperialist who equated Gandhi with Hitler, celebrated racism, and believed India would always remain unsuited to democracy. "Toye traces Churchill's shifts and velleities with impressive skill and erudition, using a vast range of contemporary newspapers to particularly good effect" (Literary Review). Toye, named Young Academic Author of the Year by Times Higher Education magazine in 2007, has synthesized the details of Churchill's life to produce "a thought-provoking, sensitive account of the nerve and muscle of empire" (Daily Express).

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Much of the white, English-speaking world has come to regard Winston Churchill with a reverence afforded few other leaders in the past century. A good deal of that praise was certainly earned by Churchill but Richard Toye's excellent new book, "Churchill's Empire", offers a broader look at the Prime Minister....his upbringing and early views...and his development as a leader and a forceful politician. It is a thoughtful and well-balanced book. Toye explores the early years of Churchill's life

and the remarkable thing about the youthful Winston was how agile he was as a politician. Modifying one's views is hardly a recipe for failure and Winston managed to charm, seduce, rail against and turn off many of his contemporaries, all the while forging a career that had more than a few starts and stops. The author really hits his stride when Churchill becomes Prime Minister and uses his experience to better direct the war effort. His warning against Hitler and Nazism helped to propel his reputation as he sought to guide Britain, and indeed the entire empire, through the war. How Churchill balanced all these competing interests is a tribute to his style and ability. One of the more fascinating aspects of Churchill during the war, by the way, is how he dealt with the "Dominions" and their respective leaders...something not covered in every reading of Churchill. Having much personal dislike for Indians and other people of color, Churchill, nonetheless, had to deal with Gandhi and the many leaders of his far-flung empire. The closing sections of the book, wonderfully covered by Toye, have to do with the post-war breakup of the British Empire and Churchill's contributions to and feelings about them.

If it is true that Abraham Lincoln is the most written-about American president, then it seems logical to assume that Winston Churchill is the most-written about British prime minister. (Which is all the more impressive given that Britain has had an "official" prime minister since 1721.) Not only is the list of books written about (or by) Churchill seemingly inexhaustible, in recent years there has also been a rash of documentaries, films and biopics. Everything from his epic career in the public arena to what he ate (or drank) for breakfast, the way he treated his valet and rehearsed his "impromptu" parliamentary statements, seems to have been covered. So why would we need yet another book? In fairness to the author, Richard Toye, he does not lay claim to writing an original work. As the author of a previous work on Churchill ("Lloyd George and Churchill: Rivals for Greatness") he knows he treads on well-traveled ground. He even states in the prologue that "this is the first attempt to provide a comprehensive treatment of Churchill's relationship with the Empire within a single volume." Does this mean that if one is too pressed for time to read Martin Gilbert or Churchill himself, that this book (at 300 pages, with 100 pages of notes and bibliography) will suffice? The short answer to that question is "yes". The book is tightly-written (maybe a little too much so) and if it had been a PhD thesis, would have to have been awarded an A for organization and thorough research. No statement Churchill ever made on the topic seems to be too trivial to be analyzed, and other influential people's views on Churchill's opinions are also comprehensively laid out.

I have read several books and seen documentaries about Winston Churchill. In CHURCHILL'S

EMPIRE, Richard Toye, the author, does not pretend to be writing an original work; it is nevertheless a fascinating work. He elaborates and helps to understand the complex personality of Churchill the man, the politician, the writer, and the Statesman, in a rapidly changing world. The well researched (107 pages of Notes) book provides a comprehensive description of Churchill's relationship with the British Empire; his contribution to the consolidation of that Empire and its dismantling. Churchill's alternating attitudes are attributed to his conscience and political conformity. Balancing these characteristics is a tribute to his ability. Richard Toye skillfully analyzes Churchill the contradictory man. It is disappointing to read that Churchill did not believe in racial equality. He disliked "African savages" and Asians. He characterized Mahatma Gandhi as a subversive fanatic. Churchill's financial extravagance or smoking and drinking habits were disgraceful. Still, Churchill's moral rectitude surpassed his prejudicial views; his virtues outweighed his shortcomings. In 1941, Churchill co-signed with Roosevelt the Atlantic Charter, reaffirming faith in the dignity of each human being and propagating a host of democratic principles. Winston Churchill understood- more than any other leader in the democratic world - the menace of Nazism. He believed that war is sometimes unavoidable and he would not accept anything less than victory over fascism, the forces of evil. In May 1940, Churchill confronted a cabinet revolt led by Lord Halifax, who wanted him to get out of the war and make a deal with Hitler in the wake of Dunkirk debacle and the crumbling of the French and Belgian armies.

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