

theorists, including William Pollack and Nancy Chodorow, as latter-day versions of the two men whose ideas were basic to the founding of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), G. Stanley Hall and Ernest Thompson Seton. Mechling discerns a “strong resemblance” between the masculinity theories of the 1890s and those of the 1990s—evidence, in his view, that the two decades “responded in similar ways to a perceived crisis in masculinity.”

But didn't the alleged crisis of the 1890s lead to the cultivation of a distinctive and traditional version of masculinity, while the theorists a century later seek to break it down? That objection disappears once we understand those old-timers and their marked “sexual ambiguities.” In Mechling's view, “the founders of the BSA were ‘role models’ for an androgynous masculinity not dissimilar from the new masculinities that emerged in response to parallel social and economic pres-

ures on masculinity in the 1990s.”

The villains of the book are today's professional Scouts and bureaucrats at BSA headquarters who vigorously oppose the admission of atheists, girls, and homosexuals. These men seek to foster “a narrow, inflexible, exclusively heterosexual definition of masculinity” because of their own “powerful anxiety about masculinity.” The particular troop of California scouts that Mechling has chosen for his study is meant to show us, by contrast, how progressive scouts can be.

Progressive and yet pragmatic. When the scoutmaster decides against holding a joint campfire with nearby Girl Scouts, Mechling approves. “You know how the boys act around girls,” the scoutmaster tells him. “They show off, get silly, get really out of control.” How, I wonder, would that basic fact of life be altered by the utopian masculinity that Mechling proposes?

—JAMES BOWMAN

## HISTORY

### CHURCHILL: *A Biography.*

By Roy Jenkins. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 1002 pp. \$40

Winston Churchill had three contemporaries who he felt may, just may, have been up to his own standard as a world leader: David Lloyd George, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Joseph Stalin. Each of the three has attracted many biographers, but few have been able to get behind the mask. Churchill's biographers do not have that problem. His psyche is exhaustingly documented in his own prodigious writings, Martin Gilbert's official biography of eight thick volumes, and countless other biographies.

Do we need another Churchill book? Jenkins answers by setting forth his unique qualifications. He has written well-received biographies of H. H. Asquith and William E. Gladstone. He has had wide parliamentary and ministerial experience. He served both as home secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer, just as Churchill did. Both he and Churchill knew what it was like to wait for the call that didn't come, though Churchill's ultimately did come. Jenkins could have used in his



Winston Churchill surveying the damage done to Coventry Cathedral during World War II.

defense Lord Chesterfield's words upon retiring: “I have been behind the scenes, both of pleasure and business. I have seen all the coarse pulleys and dirty ropes, which exhibit and move all

the gaudy machines; and I have seen and smelt the tallow candles which illuminate the whole decoration to the astonishment and admiration of the ignorant audience.”

Churchill’s enduring appeal, to biographers and readers alike, lies in his character. He outshone his contemporaries with astonishing energy, the discipline required to write book after book, and the power to survive repeated disasters, some self-inflicted and some beyond his control. Always the fighter, writer, and man of action.

Jenkins’s mastery of his subject is shown by the way he compares Churchill to Lloyd George. Both men were at the center of things at the commencement of World War I, Lloyd George as prime minister and Churchill as a member of his team. Jenkins deems them the two British politicians of genius (using the word in the sense of exceptional and original powers transcending purely rational measurement) in the first half of the 20th century. In drawing out the comparison, Jenkins says that Lloyd George was “undoubtedly stronger in a number of significant qualities than was Churchill, and one, and perhaps the most remarkable, of his strengths was that he could long exercise an almost effortless authority over Churchill.” Churchill, partly for old times’ sake and partly to safeguard his flank (there was talk of bringing back Lloyd George to act as the wartime prime minister), toyed with the idea of making his old boss the ambassador to Washington or minister of agriculture. Neither job came off.

If Churchill had died in the middle 1930s, he would be of little interest to today’s biographers. It was World War II that made him. It put him in touch with Roosevelt and Stalin. Churchill described President Roosevelt as the greatest American friend Britain ever found. Did Churchill consider FDR a personal friend? In a puzzling lapse, Churchill did not attend Roosevelt’s funeral. After considering a number of possible explanations, Jenkins writes: “It is more probable that the emotional link between Churchill and Roosevelt was never as close as was commonly thought. It was more a partnership of circumstances and convenience than a friendship of individuals, each of whom . . . was a star of a brightness which needed its own unimpeded orbit.” FDR’s views on Churchill, like FDR’s views on many

things, are still under study by the experts. Stalin’s views on Churchill will remain a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.

Jenkins, as part of the winding down, brings Gladstone on stage. Having written the Gladstone biography and now having concluded the Churchill biography, Jenkins opines that Gladstone was undoubtedly the greatest prime minister of the 19th century, and Churchill undoubtedly the greatest of the 20th century. “When I started writing this book I thought that Gladstone was, by a narrow margin, the greater man, certainly the more remarkable specimen of humanity. In the course of writing it I have changed my mind. I now put Churchill, with all his idiosyncrasies, his indulgences, his occasional childishness, but also his genius, his tenacity and his persistent ability, right or wrong, successful or unsuccessful, to be larger than life, as the greatest human being ever to occupy 10 Downing Street.”

—JACOB A. STEIN

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#### **COMMUNISM:**

##### ***A History.***

By Richard Pipes. Modern Library.

175 pp. \$19.95

This concise volume offers a sobering, superbly informed, and tragically disquieting analysis of communism. Pipes, a Harvard University historian, tells a story of lofty ideals betrayed by sordid, indeed criminal, practices. For him, this fanatical attempt at large-scale social engineering has, in the end, no redeeming features.

The best chapters deal with Pipes’s specialty, Sovietism. Lenin, he believes, arguably had a greater impact on 20th-century politics than any other public figure in the world. Pipes convincingly demonstrates that Lenin’s revolutionary passion flowed, not from a desire to transcend injustice, but from an obsessive rejection of liberal modernity, pluralism, and political freedom.

The original Marxian vision might have produced the sort of evolutionary socialism that developed in Western social democracies. But the philosophy carried with it a dictatorial potential, which Lenin, with his essentially antidemocratic, neo-