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

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-
Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. —George Santayana. History (from Greek ἱστορία, historia, meaning “inquiry; knowledge acquired by investigation”) is the study of the past. Events occurring before the invention of writing systems are considered prehistory. “History” is an umbrella term that relates to past events as well as the memory, discovery, collection, organization, presentation, and interpretation of information about these events. Historians place the past in Stories, identity and context. History can take the form of a tremendous story, a rolling narrative filled with great personalities and tales of turmoil and triumph. Each generation adds its own chapters to history while reinterpreting and finding new things in those chapters already written. History provides us with a sense of identity. By understanding where we have come from, we can better understand who we are. History provides a sense of context for our lives and our existence. --history novel --history professor --historic moment --historical novel --history --historical document. Jan 14 2007 10:11:43. Kilimanjaro. 1 2 3 4. Comments. In the words hypothesis and historical, the initial syllable is not stressed so it is common to see “an” used for both (but you will see “a” used frequently as well). This would imply that history would take an “a” since the first syllable is stressed, but the past is full of books titled “An History of...” (google “an history” and see for yourself).