

Stasavage should have attempted to produce more insights backed by heavy reasoning. Such insights could follow from a rigorous description of the politics of taxation coupled with a careful application of theory. With the attention received by Piketty, the ascendancy of the Bernie Sanders left, and Steve Bannon's recent proposal to increase the top marginal rate to above 40 percent, smaller insights grounded deeply in qualitative evidence would go much further in helping us make sense of the current tax politics paradigm than Scheve and Stasavage's bold, but ultimately hollow, analysis.

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Churchill and Orwell: The Fight for Freedom

Thomas E. Ricks

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At first glance, a dual biography of Winston Churchill and Eric Blair—who went by the pen name George Orwell—sounds like a project that shouldn't be pursued. After all, Churchill was an upper-class imperialist politician who disdained socialism. Orwell, a committed socialist, was a struggling novelist and journalist for most of his life. The two men never met each other and moved in very different circles.

And yet both men were among the few to correctly foretell the dangers of the two greatest threats to human freedom in the 20th century: nazism and communism. This shared prescience and the two men's steadfast and oftentimes lonely opposition to these two tyrannies are the focus of Thomas E. Ricks's latest book, *Churchill and Orwell: The Fight for Freedom*.

Ricks's book opens by noting another similarity between the two men: they were both almost killed before achieving notoriety. During the Spanish Civil War, a Nationalist sniper shot Orwell in the neck while he was fighting with the anti-Stalin POUM (Workers' Party of Marxist Unification). Miraculously, the bullet missed his spinal cord, arteries, and windpipe. Orwell also survived the Soviet-backed repression of the POUM.

A New York City cab driver struck Churchill at around 30 miles an hour in 1931. At the time, Churchill was enduring what he called his "wilderness years" of political isolation and was in America

hoping to pick up some speaking fees following the financial crisis of 1929. The cab dragged Churchill down the street, cracking ribs and cutting his scalp. And, during the Second Boer War, a young Churchill survived a prisoner of war camp (that he later escaped) and was at the Battle of Omdurman in Sudan.

As Ricks notes, had Churchill and Orwell been killed in Spain, South Africa, Sudan, or New York they would be remembered by only a few historians specializing in minor British politicians and literary figures. Fortunately, Churchill and Orwell survived their brushes with death, going on to become two of the last century's most influential figures.

Achieving such influence was not, however, without significant obstacles. Churchill had to contend with broad support for appeasing Hitler. The First World War, which led to the deaths of 886,000 British military personnel, had only concluded roughly two decades before Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. Many in Britain were hardly keen for another war.

Appeasement was the goal of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, whom Churchill succeeded in May 1940. But Chamberlain was hardly alone. As Ricks writes, "Dallying with fascists was not simply a pursuit of the young and the foolish." Some members of the Houses of Lords and Commons, the *Times* of London, and King Edward VIII all supported appeasement. Hard as it is for many to believe today, Churchill's warnings of Germany's rearmament fell on many deaf ears.

Orwell's voice was also a whisper in a whirlwind at times. While today considered almost a prophet of totalitarianism, Orwell faced criticism for his unrestrained opposition to the Soviet Union. *Animal Farm*, his classic anti-Stalin fable, struggled to find a publisher. And, although Soviet operatives tried to prevent the book from being published, it was eventually published in Britain in 1945, with Harcourt Brace buying the U.S. rights to *Animal Farm* for 250 pounds in December 1945 and publishing in 1946. Since then, with millions of copies have been sold around the world.

Ricks respectably manages to convey an admiration for Churchill and Orwell without ignoring their faults. He discusses Orwell's early anti-Semitism, his naïve faith in centralized economic planning, and the fact that he compiled a list of suspected communists for the British government. And, although Churchill won a Nobel Prize in literature, Ricks directly addresses the numerous factual errors in his

epic six-volume memoir *The Second World War* and his four-volume history *A History of the English Speaking Peoples*. He also mentions that Churchill's second stint as prime minister from 1951 to 1955 was hardly a glowing success. As Churchill biographer Roy Jenkins noted, "It is impossible to re-read the details of Churchill's life as Prime Minister of this second government without feeling that he was gloriously unfit for office."

Unfit for peacetime leadership Churchill may have been, but the greatest conflict in human history suited him very well. He understood the stakes, declaring in a September 1939 speech in the House of Commons, "This is no war of domination or imperial aggrandizement or material gain; no war to shut any country out of its sunlight and means of progress. It is a war, viewed in its inherent quality, to establish, on impregnable rocks, the rights of the individual, and it is a war to establish and revive the stature of man."

Later in the same speech Churchill noted that the House of Commons had been voting on wartime bills stripping the British people of some of their liberties, saying, "We look forward to the day . . . when our liberties and rights will be restored to us." But rights were not restored after the Second World War. Churchill's socialist successor, Clement Attlee, continued the national ID scheme implemented by the National Registration Act of 1939. Parliament repealed the act seven years after the war ended. The last person to be prosecuted for not producing his ID card was the liberal hero Clarence Harry Willcock, who told a London policeman, "I am a liberal, and I am against this sort of thing."

Churchill understood the risks of the war as well as the stakes, noting that his own commitment to fighting Hitler could lead to his death. As he told colleagues in a cabinet meeting, "If this long island story of ours is to end at last, let it end only when each of us lies choking in his own blood on the ground."

Orwell also felt that his firm stance against tyranny endangered his life. Following the publication of *Animal Farm* he bought a pistol to protect himself from communists. As Orwell knew from firsthand experience in Spain, Soviet agents had no qualms when it came to assassinating dissidents.

Churchill and Orwell can be praised for their foresight and bravery, but is either man worth paying attention to now? Libertarians in particular may balk at the prospect of taking lessons from a socialist and an imperialist.

And yet when anyone on the political spectrum today discusses government snooping, they speak in a language forged in Orwell's novels. "Big Brother," "thought police," "doublethink," the "memory hole," and "Room 101" are all plucked from *1984*. *Animal Farm* includes its own phrases that have found their way into modern speech, perhaps most notably, "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others." Indeed, Orwell's own name has become an adjective, with modern surveillance programs being described as "Orwellian."

Orwell also emphasized how governments engage in linguistic perversion in order to confuse meaning and help achieve their ends. In *1984*, the English Socialist Party proclaims, "War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, Ignorance is Strength." This is only one of the examples in the novel of the government asserting contradictions. The Ministry of Truth, where the protagonist Winston works, is the government's propaganda mill, erasing history. The ministry that oversees torture is the Ministry of Love. No one reading Orwell's work today can avoid thinking of contemporary examples. The United States doesn't bomb enemy fighters and torture people; it launches "kinetic military actions" against "enemy combatants" and uses "enhanced interrogation techniques."

Churchill himself is better known for phrases and quips rather than pieces of vocabulary, and Ricks separates the mythology of Churchill's wit from reality. Churchill did say, "I've taken a lot more out of alcohol than it's ever taken out of me," but he didn't tell Lady Astor that he would drink poisoned coffee if he were married to her.

Alcohol-related banter aside, Churchill is renowned for his speeches that still inspire today. "We will never surrender," "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few," and "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat" are but a few examples.

Ricks dedicates a section of one chapter to Churchill's occasional open displays of tears during the war, something that runs contrary to the British people's aversion to public expressions of emotion. Those tears sometimes appeared when Churchill delivered speeches he had written himself, a testament to his writing talents (or his ego, perhaps). Like Orwell, Churchill's mastery of the English language helped his name become an adjective: "Churchillian."

As things stand, our governments are not Orwellian (the Patriot Act and GCHQ notwithstanding) and our political rhetoric is hardly

Churchillian. Those with a propensity to write “We live in an Orwellian dystopia” would not be able to do so in truly totalitarian states. While government surveillance is a serious concern, we’re not anywhere close to living in Orwell’s Oceania.

A glance at the current crop of political leaders uncovers no one with Churchill’s rhetorical skills. That is a shame, especially given that Ricks’s book leaves one feeling that a stubborn political orator with a penchant for drinking, the written word, and human freedom would be very welcome right now. So too would a journalist with Orwell’s writing style, combat experience, skepticism of authority, and imagination.

Aside from exhibiting his subjects’ talents and flaws, all of which have been discussed for decades, Ricks provides some valuable insights to anyone concerned with the state of liberalism. When it comes to the defense of freedom, allies can come from any wing of the political spectrum, but mounting a defense of liberalism still can be a lonely—though ultimately worthwhile—endeavor.

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The Limits of the Market: The Pendulum between Government and Market

Paul De Grauwe

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In the preface to *The Limits of the Market*, Paul De Grauwe, an economics professor at the London School of Economics, begins with two basic premises: first, that a centrally planned economy does not work; second, that pure market systems do not exist anywhere. According to De Grauwe, “The only relevant question, then, is how precisely that mixture should look”—that is, the correct mix of market freedom and public policy oversight.

He writes of a “Great Economic Pendulum”—that swings between greater and lesser government intervention—“cyclical movements” in economic history. To illustrate this, he describes a general decline in government involvement in the world economy during the first part of the 20th century. Then the Great Depression ushered in greater government involvement that continued through the middle decades of the century. That gave way to renewed