

The Darkest hour

I saw this film on Saturday. It was a moving reminder of how dire the UK position was in 1940, and how brave were the people and their new Prime Minister in deciding to fight on against the odds.

The film portrayed a very human Churchill. They saw him as a man who drank too much, was often tough and thoughtless towards his staff, and who was capable of bad misjudgements. They also captured the strength of mind and character which grasped both how bad the position was, and how despite that knew ultimate victory was possible. He had consistently warned of the dangers from Germany during the 1930's and understood instinctively that you could not reach a friendly agreement with an evil dictator.

The UK establishment had once again let the country down. It had plunged it into a war with a small and insufficiently equipped army which they put at risk on the continent, just as they had done in 1914. As Churchill assumed office they told him the whole army was likely to be killed or forced to surrender. Having accomplished this dreadful feat, they switched to thinking facing defeat would be a good time to sue for peace. They thought Hitler might offer an enfeebled UK with no army a good deal, when the history of the previous few years showed you could not trust his word and should expect him to continue conquering and occupying countries including our own.

Churchill agonised over the pressures on him to seek a negotiated peace, before he realised that the public would back his belief that the only course was to fight for our freedom. Many of us are so grateful that Churchill and our parents and grandparents decided to sacrifice six years of their lives and to risk untimely death to driving the hatred and violence out of the world by defeating its authors. The film got across so well the common sense and determination of the people, in contrast to the rash stupidity of some of the establishment. It used Churchill's own wonderful words to show he spoke for the majority in a way which defeated or disarmed his many critics amongst the senior politicians and officials.