

CHURCHILL IN PERSPECTIVE

The following is from Cameron Hazlehurst's
Introduction to *The People's Rights*
by Winston Churchill (1910) reviewed on page 81.

IT WAS ONE of the ironies of Churchill's career that, by the very fluency and remorselessness of his own attacks on land monopoly and protectionism, he undermined the foundation of the political system which he strove to preserve. The more sharply focused the wealthy Conservative enemy became, the greater was the drift away from the sanity of Liberalism into the extremes of class antagonism. In using the dread of future class warfare as a political weapon in 1909, Churchill and his Liberal colleagues helped to unleash powerful forces. Perhaps the emergence of a strong Labour Party was inevitable. But by invoking the Socialist spectre, the Liberals unintentionally hastened a political transformation which they were to prove incapable of controlling.

In the language and aspirations of *The People's Rights*, Churchill's vision of a just and tolerant society is eloquently proclaimed. War and social upheaval shattered many hopes. But Churchill clung to his pre-war ideal of ameliorative reform without revolution. Those who seek to understand why he left the Liberal Party and returned to the Conservative fold in the 1920's must look back beyond the age of Bolshevik revolution and terror to the years before 1914. By associating himself with a transformed Conservative Party, Churchill was not lightly abandoning the cherished principles of his Liberal years. He was, with deep sadness, recognizing the existence of a new world.