

"We Seek No Profit"

"THE HARD, COLD, VINDICTIVE TRUTH"

By WINSTON CHURCHILL, Prime Minister of Great Britain

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I AM deeply grateful for the kindness with which I have been treated, not only here today on this to me outstanding occasion, but in the whole discharge of my responsibilities.

The strain of protracted war is hard and severe upon men at executive summit of great countries, however lightly care may seem to sit upon them. They have need of all the help and comfort their fellow workmen can give. I feel myself buoyed up by your good will here today and indeed I have felt uplifted through all these years by the consideration with which the British people have treated me even when serious mistakes have been made.

Always they have given a generous measure of trust and friendship and I have never felt hustled or barracked or rocketed in any of the decisions it is my duty to take in conjunction with my colleagues or in regard to the matters it is my task to submit to Parliament.

There is no doubt that this consideration shown to their leader by the British people, though far above his deserts, is a very real and practical help in the conduct of the war. It gives me confidence to go on.

People Truly United

Of all the wars we have ever waged in the long continuity of our history, there has never been one which more truly united the entire British people and the British races throughout the world than this present fearful struggle for the freedom and progress of mankind.

We entered it of our own free will without being directly assaulted. We entered it upon a conviction of purpose which was clearly comprehended by all classes and parties and by the whole mass of the people and we have persevered together through good and evil fortune without the slightest weakening of our will power or division of our strength.

We entered it ill prepared and almost unarmed. We entered it without counting the cost and upon a single stupendous impulse at the call of honor. We strove long, too long, for peace and suffered thereby, but from the moment when we gave our guaranty that we would not stand by idly and see Poland trampled down by domination we have never looked back, never flagged, never doubted, never flinched. We were sure of our duty and we have discharged and will discharge it without swerving or slackening to the end.

We seek no profit, we want no territory or aggrandizement. We expect no reward and we will accept no compromise. It is on that footing that we wish to be judged, first in our own consciences and afterward by posterity.

It is even more remarkable that the unity which has existed and endured in this small, densely populated island should have extended with equal alacrity and steadfastness to all parts of our worldwide commonwealth and empire. Some people like the word commonwealth. Others, and I

am one of them, are not at all ashamed of the word empire. But why should we not have both?

Wars come with great suddenness, and many of the deep, slow courses which lead to the explosion are often hidden from or only dimly comprehended by the masses of people even in the regions most directly affected. Time, distance, the decorum of diplomacy and a legitimate desire to preserve peace all impose their restraint upon public discussion and upon prior arrangement. Therefore I think the expression British Commonwealth and Empire may well be found the most convenient means to describe this unique association of races which was built up partly by conquest, largely by consent, but mostly unconsciously and without design, within all the embracing golden circle of the crown.

Dominions Not Obligated

The British people, taught by lessons they have learned in the past, have found the means to attach to the motherland vast self-governing dominions upon whom there rests no obligation other than that of sentiment and tradition to plunge into war by the side of the motherland. None of these dominions except Southern Ireland, which does not in its present dispensation accept dominion status, has ever failed to respond.

It is an overpowering influence and impulse that makes Canada and Australia, that makes New Zealanders and South Africans send their manhood across the ocean to fight and die. In each one of these countries with its long and varied history behind it this extraordinary spectacle is an outstanding example of the triumph of mind over matter and of the human heart over shortsighted self-interest.

In the vast subcontinent of India, which we trust will presently find full satisfaction within the British Commonwealth of Nations, martial races and many others have thronged to the imperial standard. More than 2,000,000 have joined the armed forces and have distinguished themselves in many cases during the fiercest conflicts with the Germans, Italians and Japanese. All the great countries engaged in this war count their armies by the millions but the Indian Army has a peculiar characteristic not found in the armies of Britain or the United States or Russia or France or in the armies of our foes in that it is entirely composed of volunteers. Not one has been conscripted or compelled.

The same thing is broadly true throughout the great colonial empire. Many scores of thousands of troops from the immense tropical spaces or drawn from lonely islands nursed by the waves have come overseas. Many volunteers there were for whom we could not find arms. Many there are for whom we can not find opportunity. But I say that the universal ardor of our colonial empire to join in this awful conflict and continue in high temper through all its ups and downs is the first answer that I would make to those ignorant, envious voices who call into question the greatness of the work we are doing throughout the world and which we shall continue to do.

The time came when this loosely and variously knitted world-spread association, where so much was left unwritten and undefined, was confronted with the most searching test of all. The mother country, home of kingship, this famous island, seemed to enter the very jaws of

death and destruction. Three years ago, all over the world, friend and foe alike, every one who had not an eye of faith might well have deemed our speedy ruin was at hand. Against the triumphant might of Hitler with the greedy Italian at his tail we stood alone with resources so slender that one shudders to enumerate them even now.

Then surely was the moment for the empire to break up, for each of its widely dispersed communities to seek safety on the winning side, for those who thought themselves oppressed to throw off their yoke and make better terms betimes with the conquering Nazi and Fascist power. Then was the time.

Bonds of Freedom

But what happened? It was proved that the bonds which unite us, though supple and elastic, are stronger than the tensest steel. It was proved that they were bonds of the free and thus could rise superior alike to the most tempting allurements of surrender and the harshest threat of doom.

In that dark, terrific and also glorious hour we received from all parts of his majesty's dominions, from the greatest to the smallest, from the strongest and from the weakest, from the most modern and the most simple, assurances that we would all go down or come through together.

You will forgive me if on this occasion to me so memorable here in the heart of mighty London I rejoice in the soundness of our institutions and proclaim my faith in our destiny.

But now I must speak of the great Republic of the United States, whose power arouses no fear and whose pre-eminence excites no jealousy in British bosoms.

Upon the association and intimate alignment of the policy of the United States and the British Commonwealth and Empire depends, more than upon any other factor, the immediate future of the world. If they walk or, if need be, march together in harmony and in accordance with the moral and political conceptions to which the English-speaking peoples have given birth and which are frequently referred to in the Atlantic Charter, all will be well. If they fall apart and wander astray from the lines of their destiny there will be no end or measure to the miseries and confusion which would mark modern civilization.

This is no rhetorical extravagance in genial sentiment for a festive occasion; it is hard, cold, vindictive truth. Yet there are many light and wayward spirits in both our countries who show themselves by word and action unmindful of this fundamental fact. It is a fact in no way derogatory to the mighty nation now fighting by our side or to any nation great or small making its way through the perils of the present age.

We seek no narrow or selfish combination. We presume not at all upon the lawful interests and characteristics of any ally or friendly state. We nourish the wannest feelings of fellowship toward the valiant Russian people, with whom we have made a twenty years' treaty of friendship and mutual aid. We foresee an expanding future for the long-enduring Republic of China. We look forward to a revival of the unity and true greatness of France. We have the loyal and faithful comradeship of all.

Nevertheless the tremendous and awe-inspiring fact stares the British and American democracies between the eyes that acting together we can help all nations safely into harbor and that if we divide, all will toss and drift for a long time on dark and stormy seas.

It is fitting in a singular manner to speak upon this theme of the fraternal association of Britain and the United States here amid the proud monuments and prouder ruins of the City of London, because nothing ever made warmer the feeling between the British and American peoples than the unflinching resistance of London to the formidable and prolonged assault of the enemy.

You have given me this casket which contains my title as nan of the City of London. I have not always been wrong about the future of events and if you will permit me I shall inscribe some of these words within it as my testimony, because I should like to be held accountable for them in the years which I shall not see, the phrase: "London can take it."

And the proof of it that was given stirred every generous heart in the United States, and their illustrious chief, watching the whole scene of the world with eyes of experience and conviction, sustained by the Congress of the United States, came to our aid with the famous lend-lease act in the manner most serviceable to the great causes which were at stake.

Won U. S. Sympathy

There is no doubt that the sympathy of the United States for the cause of freedom and its thorough detestation of the Nazi creed and all the menace that it bears to American institutions had drawn the United States near the edge of the conflict when the foul Jap saw his chance to make his bid for Asiatic domination by striking his blow at Pearl Harbor.

Since then we and the Americans have waged war, sharing alike, taking the rough with the smooth, not as one people but certainly as though we were one army, one navy and one air force. So we shall continue like brothers, certainly until unconditional surrender and until our goals have been achieved and I trust until after all due measure has been taken so as to secure our safety in future years, safety from ill usage.

Should Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy collapse under the flail of Soviet Russia and the not inconsiderable exertions of the British and American Armies in the Mediterranean and elsewhere, and should the war industries of Germany be blasted out of existence by British and American air power; should this victory be achieved before Japan has been laid low, I stand here to tell you today, as I told the Congress of the United States in your name, every man, every ship and every airplane in the King's service that can be moved to the Pacific will be sent and there maintained in action by the people of the British Commonwealth and Empire in priorities for as many years as are needed to make the Japanese in their turn submit or bite the dust.

Reviews Domestic Affairs

I will turn for the moment on this occasion from world events to our domestic affairs. Here it may justly be said that our slowly wrought British institutions have proved themselves even better adapted to this crisis than any we have known in the past. His Majesty has a national government composed of leading men of all parties officially authorized by their parties to serve the state and only the state at the present juncture.

On the home front I submit with diffidence and confidence that in the important spheres of finance, labor, agriculture and food and several others I can mention, efficient, vigorous and successful administration has been provided. This will bear comparison with what happened not only in the last war—which we also won—but has not been outclassed by what is happening in any other country or under any other system, democratic or totalitarian.

Our vast and influential newspaper press has known how to combine independence and liveliness with discretion and patriotism.

I rejoice that both houses of Parliament have preserved even in our most bitter period full authority and freedom. As an old House of Commons man I would add that if I am here today to receive as Prime Minister the honors which you pay me it is because and only because of the resolute, overwhelming and unwearying support I have received from the most famous and most vital of all parliamentary assemblies.

Lauds Service by Monarchy

Of all our institutions there is none which has served us better in the hour of need than our ancient monarchy. All that we have is centered upon and embodied by the King and Queen, most dearly beloved and honored by all the country. We all welcome back here our gracious and gallant King from his visit to the victorious army in Africa. None rejoices on his return with more fervor than his minister who took the responsibility for advising him not to restrain his royal pleasure in a journey of this peculiar character.

The general progress of war is satisfactory. Two great battles were won by the Allies. Every one has heard of the Battle in Tunisia when 350,000 Germans or Italians were made captive or slain and of the immense quantities of war material and shipping which were captured or destroyed. We have rejoiced soberly but all the more profoundly at this signal military episode, which ranks with the magnificent Russian victory at Stalingrad and which takes its place in Britain with her most famous victories.

There was another, a no less notable battle which was fought in May in the Atlantic against U-boats. In May the German Admiralty made extreme exertions to prevent the movement to Great Britain of the enormous convoys of food and materials which are continuously received from the United States and which we must bring in safely if our war-making capacity is to be maintained. Long lines of U-boats were spread to meet these convoys and fifteen or twenty U-boats were concentrated in each attack.

To meet this the British and American and Canadian forces of the sea and air hurled their strength at the U-boats. The fighting took place mainly around the convoys and also over a wide expanse of ocean. It ended in the total defeat of the U-boat attack. More than thirty U-boats were certainly destroyed in the month of May, floundering in many cases with their crews in the dark depths of the sea. Staggered by these deadly losses the U-boats have recoiled to lick their wounds and mourn their dead.

Now as a result of the May victory and massacre of U-boats we have had in June the best month we have ever known in the whole forty-six of the war. The prodigious shipbuilding exertions of the United States and the considerable contribution of Britain and also Canada have produced an output of new ships which is somewhere between seven and ten times as much as our losses from enemy action in the month of June.

Since the middle of May scarcely a single merchant ship has been sunk in the whole of the North Atlantic. In June, also, although the convoys are not being seriously attacked at the present time, U-boat losses have been most solid and encouraging.

I give these facts purposely in a form which conveys the truth without giving precise or detailed information to circles wider than those with which we ourselves are concerned. There are two conclusions to be drawn from them. The first is that we must not assume that this great improvement will be maintained or that bad patches do not lie ahead. The second is that, although encouraged by the growing success of our methods, we must redouble our efforts and ingenuity.

The disasters of the U-boats in May and June have a bearing on another phase of our offensive war. These two months have seen the heaviest discharge of bombs on the munitions and industrial war centers of Germany. Three years ago Hitler boasted he would rub out the cities of Britain. Certainly in the nine months before he abandoned his attack we suffered very heavy damage to our buildings and grievous hindrance to our life and work. More than 40,000 of our people were killed and 120,000 wounded. But now those who sowed the wind harvest the whirlwind.

In the first half of this year the R. A. F. alone has cast on Germany thirty-five times the tonnage of bombs which in that same six months of this year has been discharged on this island. In one single night—nay in one single hour—we had cast on Dusseldorf 2,000 tons of terrible explosive and incendiary bombs for a loss of thirty-eight aircraft, while in the whole first half of this same year the enemy had discharged on us no more than 1,500 tons of bombs at a cost of 245 aircraft. *

In addition to this the United States air fleet in this country, already so powerful and growing with extreme rapidity, has by precision daylight bombing inflicted grave injury upon the most sensitive nerve center of the enemy's war production and American crews and pilots are continually performing feats of arms of the highest skill with dauntless audacity and devotion.

All these facts and tendencies, by no means unfavorable in their general character, must stimulate our joint exertion in the most intense degree and on an even vaster scale.

I have never indulged in shallow and fugitive optimism, but I have thought it right to make this statement because I am sure it will not lead to the slightest complacency or relaxation of the awful force which is now being brought into action.

This force will be remorselessly applied to the guilty nations and their wicked leaders who imagined that their superiority of air power would enable them to terrorize and subjugate first all of Europe and afterward the world. They will be applied and never was there such a case of the biter bitten.

During the summer our main attack has been upon the mainspring of German war industry—in the Ruhr—but as the nights become longer and as the United States air force becomes more numerous our strong arms will lengthen both by night and by day and there is no industrial or military target in Germany that will not receive as we deem necessary the utmost application of exterminating force. The war industry of Germany has already to some extent been dispersed in numerous smaller towns. When the cities are disposed of we will follow it there.

Presently the weight of the Russian air attack, now mainly absorbed by their long front line, will contribute an additional quota to the total blitz.

This is, I can quite well believe, the somber prospect for the German people and one which Doctor Goebbels certainly is justified in painting in the darkest hue.

But when we remind ourselves of the frightful tyrannies and cruelties with which the German armies, their gauleiters and subordinate tormentors are now afflicting almost all Europe; when we read of mass executions of Poles, Norwegians, Dutchmen, Czechoslovakians, Frenchmen, Yugoslavs and Greeks; when we see these ancient and honored countries of whose deeds and traditions Europe is heir, when we see them under this merciless alien yoke and when we see their patriots fighting with tierce desperation, we may feel sure we hear the sword of justice and we resolve to use that sword with the utmost severity to the fullest and to the end.

It is at this point that the heavy defeats recently sustained by the U-boats play their part in the general attack upon German morale. Apart from mysterious promises of revenge, one hope which Doctor Goebbels holds out to the German people is that though they suffer the extreme tribulation of air bombing, the U-boats on the ocean are inflicting equal or even more deadly injuries upon the British and American power to wage war. When that hope dies—and die it will—it will appear to the most dispassionate observer that a somewhat raw and bleak outlook is beginning to open itself before Hitler's accomplices and dupes. We must allow these corrective processes to take their course.

Cautions Against Over-optimism

Meantime, this is not a time for us to indulge in sanguine predictions. Rather should we remind ourselves of St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." I may, therefore, say that our affairs are in considerable better posture than they were some time ago, and that we intend to remain steadfast and unwearying in doing our duty and our best, whatever may betide.

I have still to speak of the war in the Mediterranean, about which there is so much talk at the present time. Mussolini's Italian Fascists, who are after all only a small privileged proportion of the real Italian nation, seem to be suffering from the war of nerves of which they and their German masters made so much use in former times. So far they have only been subjected to preliminary and discursive bombardment, but they already are speculating feverishly where the blow will fall and what will be its weight.

It is no part of our interest to relieve that anxiety. They may remember how they themselves struck at the Turks in Tripoli, at Abyssinia and Albania and how they fell upon the Greeks and set out to conquer Egypt. And they may

look back regretfully to the day when they used to disturb the peace of the world and when it rested with them which weaker community could be struck down first. I can do nothing to help them resolve their fears, which, communicated to their allies, may perhaps have led to the remarkably long delay of the opening of the promised German offensive against Russia.

Heavy Fighting Before Fall

But I have some words of caution to say to our own people. First of all, great military operations are dominated by the risks and turns of the future. I know of no certainty in war

and that is particularly true of amphibious war. Therefore any mood of overconfidence should be severely repressed.

Another point which should be comprehended is that all large and amphibious operations, especially if they require the co-operation of two or more countries, require long months of organization with refinements and complexities hitherto unknown. In war all impulses, impatient desires and sudden flashes of military instinct can not hasten the course of events.

I can not go further today than to say this—very probably there will be heavy fighting in the Mediterranean and elsewhere before the leaves of autumn fall. For the rest we must leave the unhappy Italians and their German tempters and taskmasters anxieties which will grow from week to week and from month to month.

This, however, I will add. We United Nations demand from the Nazis, Fascist and Japanese tyrannies unconditional surrender. By that we mean that their whole power to resist must be completely broken and that they must yield themselves absolutely to our justice and mercy. It also means that we must take all those far-sighted measures which are necessary to prevent the world from being again convulsed and wrecked and blackened by their calculated blows and ferocious aggression.

It does not mean and it never can mean that we are to stain our victorious arms by inhumanity or by mere lust and vengeance or that we do not plan a world in which all branches of the human family may look forward to what the *American Constitution finely calls "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

*An oversight on part of the Prime Minister: The phrase is from the Declaration of Independence.

* Die gesprochene Rede weicht hier ab.

<https://winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1941-1945-war-leader/let-them-reap-the-whirlwind/> bei 8min57s

Manfred Heise 2020-01-12