

# PRESS

## DEPARTMENT OF STATE

December 10, 1974

No. 519

ADDRESS BY  
THE HONORABLE HENRY A. KISSINGER  
SECRETARY OF STATE  
AT THE CHURCHILL CENTENARY DINNER  
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1974  
GIVEN BY THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR  
AND THE WOODROW WILSON INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR SCHOLARS  
AT THE RESIDENCE OF THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR



Mr. Speaker, Mr. Ambassador, Distinguished guests,

I am in a difficult position, since I did not know Sir Winston, but I have admired him all my life. And I asked myself, after I was handed a commemorative speech draft by the Department of State, what I might say that would be significant. And it seemed to me that the only meaningful thing I could say - I could talk about - is to speak to you extemporaneously about what Winston Churchill means to those of us who attempt to practice, inadequately, by comparison to him, the art of statesmanship today.

And one has to begin by asking oneself how it is that this son of the Victorian Age, who grew up before the First World War, is more relevant to us today than most of our contemporaries. What is it that he did and said that moves us so in our time?

As far as I am concerned, it is not only because he led his people and all of civilization in a victorious war, for no British Statesman would have had another choice. But it is that his convictions, his style and his nobility make us all proud to have been his contemporary. In our time, which is confused by detail and obsessed by difficult choices, of which it knows all the parameters and few of the purposes, it is well to remember a heroic leader, who was willing to walk alone and who illustrated the profoundest problem of leadership; which is not intelligence, since most leaders are of roughly equal intelligence; and it is not technical skill, which can easily be hired; but it is to have a vision of the future and the courage to walk towards it.

Peoples learn only from experience. They know only when it is too late to act. But their leaders must act as if their intuition were already experienced, as if their vision were the truth. If they get too far ahead of their contemporaries they may find themselves isolated. If they confine themselves to the experience of their contemporaries, they doom themselves to irrelevance. Winston Churchill knew much isolation, but he was never irrelevant.

And I would like to follow some of the remarks that were made by Sir Christopher about, not what Sir Winston did before the war and during the war, but about his vision of the period after the war, because his foresight was as unailing then as it had been throughout his life.

**For further information contact:**

He understood, having just emerged from a desperate war, that the most overwhelming problem that mankind faced was the problem of peace. In 1945 he wrote: "The bomb brought peace, but men alone can keep that peace and henceforward they will keep it under penalties which threaten the survival not only of civilization, but of humanity itself. In these years we must remould the relationships of all men, wherever they dwell, in all the nations. We must remould them in such a way that these men do not wish or dare to fall upon each other for the sake of vulgar and outdated ambitions, or for passionate differences in ideology; and that international parties of supreme authority may give peace on earth and decree justice among men."

No better statement of our contemporary agenda has been stated in the nearly 30 years that have passed. And, as Sir Christopher pointed out, this leader, who all his life had been a passionate anti-Communist, profoundly distrustful of the Soviet Union, nevertheless realized that the fundamental problem of the post-war period was to achieve what we would today call detente.

And where others were waiting to build situations of strength, he realized that time was short and that we must bring matters to a head as rapidly as we possibly could for a rapid settlement. He said, in 1946: "Our difficulties and dangers with the Soviet Union will not be removed by closing our eyes to them. They will not be removed by mere waiting to see what happens. Nor will they be removed by a policy of appeasement. What is needed is a settlement; and the longer this is delayed the more difficult it will be and the greater our dangers will become."

He knew too that the United States had a major responsibility and that the unity of the English-speaking people was at the core of Atlantic unity. And again he evoked it with his usual eloquence. "The price of greatness" he said about the United States, "is responsibility. If the people of the United States had continued in mediocre station, struggling with the wilderness, absorbed in their own affairs and a factor of no consequences in the movement of the world, they might have remained forgotten and undisturbed beyond their protecting oceans. But one cannot rise to be in many ways the leading community in the civilised world without being involved in its problems, without being convulsed by its agonies, and inspired by its causes."

In 1946 he said "The American Eagle sits on his perch, a large, strong bird with formidable beak and claws. There he sits motionless; and Mr. Gromyko is sent day after day to prod him with a sharp pointed stick - now his neck, now under his wings, now his tail feathers. All the time the Eagle keeps quite still. But it would be a great mistake to suppose that nothing is going on inside the breast of the Eagle." And when the Eagle stirred, Sir Winston knew that it had to be based on the friendship of the English-speaking people.

And when I quote him so much, it is because I could not presume to match his eloquence, even as I share his views. "In these last years of my life," he said "there is a message of which I conceive myself to be a bearer. It is a very simple message. It is that we should stand together. We should stand together in malice to none, in greed for nothing, but in defence of those causes which we hold dear. The orders I sent to the Congress of the United States in a dark hour in 1941, to walk together, in majesty and peace."



And, as Sir Christopher pointed out, just as he was not a little Englishman, he was also not confining his inspiration to the English-speaking people. He, who had fought Germany in Europe in two wars, was the first leading statesman to call for a united Europe which knew no victors or vanquished; in which all the little children in this tormented world may find themselves not victors nor vanquished, but the heirs of all the treasures of the past; and masters of all the signs, the abundance, and the glory of the future.

And it is a measure of our contemporary travail that the agenda which was sketched by Sir Winston in 1945, 1946 and 1947 is still unfulfilled. The problem of peace has still eluded us. Indeed its definition is still disputed. The unity of Europe has not yet been achieved and the Atlantic Community has remained illusive. And the measure of our success still remains the fulfillment of Sir Winston's wishes.

But if perchance we should succeed, a generation too late, to achieve his inspiration, he would be with us still, because we would still need and remember his style of leadership. We would still remember that here was a leader who knew who he was and who did not need success to define his values. He did not need power to measure his quality and he knew his worth regardless of approbation. He wrote once: "the only guide to a man is his conscience. The only shield to his memory is directitude and sincerity of his action. It is very imprudent to walk through life without this shield, because we are so often mocked by the failure of our hopes and the upsetting of our calculations. But with this shield, however the fates may play, we march always in the ranks of honour."

This theme of honor and nobility recurs through all the speeches and all the writings of Sir Winston, because he knew that all people live by a sense of continuity; that they must treat challenges as an elevation of their spirit and not as a technical issue to be overcome by tactics. "When danger is far off," he wrote once, "we may think of our weakness. When it is near, we must never forget our strength." And in 1940 he said: "these are not dark days. These are great days - the greatest that our country has ever lived. And we must all thank God that we have been allowed to play a part in making these days memorable in the history of our race."

He understood that it matters not only that things are done, but how things are done. And therefore he showed man of what he is capable; and he demonstrated that cathedrals are not built by saints, that politics become insoluble only when it is purely tactical.

And therefore he fulfilled his life and our future in words that he wrote nearly 70 years ago. "What is the use of living", he wrote in 1917, "if it be not to strive for noble causes and to make this world a better place for those who will live in it after we are gone. How else can we put ourselves in harmonious relation with the great varieties and consolations of the infinite and the eternal. And I avow my faith that we are marching towards better days. Humanity will not be cast out. We are going on; and already behind the distant mountains is the promise of the sun."

Thank you very much.

\* \* \* \* \*