



A Tribute to Mr.Churchill

Taler

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1 Mr. Rector, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dr. Winston Churchill,

It is my happy duty, on behalf of my fellow Doctors of this University, to welcome the newly created Doctor honoris causa to our ranks. But in all truth, I
5 find myself in somewhat of a "Doctor's Dilemma".

My subject is so rich in glory, so varied in accomplishment, that it would serve for many doctorates. Winston Churchill is already a legendary figure. He is himself, more than anyone I know, the very embodiment of the living spirit of
10 History. And for more than fifty years he has been, historically speaking, where it mattered, when it mattered.

He was in the forefront of the last great cavalry battle in history at Omdurman. He heard the thunder of Ludendorff's guns before the break-through towards
15 Amiens. He was in the Western Desert with the Eighth Army before El Alamein. He went forward himself with the British troops when they crossed the Rhine. And he has stood amid the ruins of Hitler's Chancery to say- with a twinkle in his eye- sic transit gloria mundi.

20 He is a soldier and a statesman, an unparalleled administrator and a House of Commons man. He is a historian, poet, writer and orator. He is a painter and, last but not least, a stonemason and a bricklayer. For one man, that should suffice!

25 Yet, at the same time, there runs through his life a unity of conception- for in him there is a genius, an integrity, a fixity of purpose, which resolves all is accomplishments into one.

30 Like another great doctor England has produced- Samuel Johnson- he is a literary John Bull of everlasting fame. Both are inexhaustible sources of wit and humour, and there is no record of either ever having been at a loss for an answer. Both are supreme masters of the happy phrase. And, like the great orators of antiquity, their words will live as long as time itself. Both, too, build
35 upon the solid foundation of Western European culture and they have in common the same warmth of heart and the same abiding love for England.

It has been said that the British character is an integral part of the British Empire, the corner-stone of its entire structure and that it is, no less, the secret
40 of the strength of the great American Republic. Winston Churchill is the very embodiment of that character and the living expression of its history and tradition. Yet, at the same time, he has the most vital qualities of his mother's native land. And from this combination springs his power to bring together the Empire and freedom, democracy and tradition.

45 What is the source of his invincibility? It is, I think, the typically British trait that he is at his best when things are at their worst. That he is, at all times, the indefatigable servant of truth.

50 It was he who, long before the war, had the courage and the strength of purpose to "swim against the stream". Indeed, on occasion he set his entire career at hazard in the interests of truth. And, like Demosthenes, he strove to open our eyes to the deadly peril that threatened our civilisation.

55 It was because of this that we placed our unquestioning trust in him during the dark years of war, even when disaster seemed close at hand. It was because of this that he could give us hope even when Singapore fell. Let me recall his words:

60 "This, therefore, is one of those moments when the British race and nation can show their quality and their genius. This is one of those moments when it can draw from the heart of misfortune the vital impulses of victory."

His speeches derived their tremendous power from his ability to see with superb
65 clarity. With this rare gift of vision and the creative imagination of the great artist, he saw the truth plainly with the mind and eyes of a child. And therein

lies genius. He never aspired to be a prophet, but at least his prophecies came true.

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As long ago as 1901, he saw the character of the new war in all its frightfulness. When, in 1925, he wrote "The World Crisis", he foresaw the very weapons which would be used later-the flying bomb, the V 2,- in his own words:

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"Explosives guided automatically in flying machines without a human pilot, in ceaseless procession upon a hostile city." It threatened, to his mind, the suicide of humanity. And he threw all his strength into the task of preventing the catastrophe by awakening his people to the danger. He saw that Britain's weakness was Europe's peril. He perceived with crystal clarity the significance of the march of events. He followed Hitler's plans step by step, foresaw their development and pointed out the way in which disaster could be avoided. He warned in vain a world which rolled on blindly to the very edge of the abyss. He could indeed say with Jeremiah-"without vision the people go astray".

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He had no Aladdin's Lamp to aid him. His vision sprang from this extraordinary power to interpret events, a power which derived, not only from an alert mind, but from an intense self-discipline, and an iron pertinacity.

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He had the gift of seizing upon essentials, of seeing what was actually happening behind the mask. And history was his teacher. It was not merely that he had read and had been inspired by the great historians. He was himself a profound student of history and, as we know from a long line of masterly works, he belongs in his own right to the great writers of history. This was the crown and completion of his equipment as a statesman, and it has made him a teacher from whom we all have learned.

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The really great historians are not always those whose work is done in the seclusion of a study. They are men of affairs, men of action, who have themselves shaped the course of events and set in motion the processes by which history is made, wielders of the sword as well as the pen- not to mention the paintbrush and the builder's trowel!

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It was indeed fortunate for the world that a master historian came forward in the hour of need to guide its destiny and inspire the British people to write the noblest page in all their long history. What if Hitler had studied the history of England! If, for example, he had read only the "Life and Times of

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Marlborough" or "Napoleon's campaign in Russia". Fortunately a sense of history seems to have been lacking in him. Winston Churchill, on the other hand, knew that only on the foundation of the past can the future be solidly and securely built.

At the same time as he was building cottages and a swimming-pool with his own hands at Chartwell while Hitler's dark shadow crept over the green fields and gardens of Kent, Mr. Churchill was laying the foundations of victory by writing his master-work on the life of his great ancestor, Marlborough.

He delved deep into that period of England's history when her destiny no less hung in the balance. He seized, not only upon the essential lines of British foreign policy, but upon the problems of Europe well. He saw how Marlborough, as a military genius and the creator of the Grand Alliance, put a stop Louis XIV's dreams of domination and he knew the bitter story of how Britain had won that war and lost the peace. His splendid study of his famous forebear was a spiritual arsenal from which he drew the strength to emulate and extend his ancestor's achievements.

I have the impression that that book, in which the past and the present meet and intermingle, was written with the full realization of the plight in which the world found itself- and the part which England would be called upon to play. It was, perhaps, with this in mind that Mr. Churchill said prophetically in 1933 that "the most glorious chapters of Britain's history are yet be written."

Mr. Churchill saw how, in former times, England had so often stood alone against tyranny- against the Armada of Spain and the aspirations of Louis and Napoleon- and how, by making herself the centre of the Grand Alliance, she stopped the aggressor in his imagined hour of triumph.

With this in mind he strove, from 1933 onwards, to shape a grand armed alliance under the aegis of the League of Nations in the hope that it might maintain the balance. He saw that only through an alliance of the peace-loving nations, great and small, and on the principle of collective security, could a potential aggressor be held and war prevented.

That was the sovereign plan- then and now. And it is a conception which he has never relinquished. Even when Britain stood alone he said that victory lay in

holding out until the dictators made a fatal blunder, which would restore the balance and bring the New world with all its might and power to rescue and liberate the Old.

150 None was better fitted than he to bring his father's and mother's native lands together in the pursuit of a common ideal. He saw the solution to the riddle of Russia in Russia's own national interests. He saw her as a potential ally and it was for this reason that, on the

155 Night of June 22nd 1941, when Russia was attacked, he gathered the democratic world to pledge all possible support to the Soviet Union.

He watched over this alliance and flew half-way round the world on his magic carpet to bind the Allies still closer together.

160 This grand alliance was not an expression of power politics. The war was not fought just for the British Empire; we did not fight only for Norway and the rights of small nations. We fought for a higher and a greater cause. We fought for the reign of law, for the fundamental rights of Man, for freedom of thought
165 and for humanity against the forces of evil and barbarism.

That was, and still is, the moral foundation of Britain's foreign policy. That was what lay behind Churchill's words when, in the hour of victory, he emphasized the need to guard the high ideals for which we had gone to battle, to ensure that
170 they should never be swept aside. That was what he meant when he pleaded that the words Freedom and Democracy should not be distorted from their true meaning. That the phrase "United Nations" should not be left to become a hollow mockery, an empty name.

175 This is the line he has followed in his work for the re-establishment of European civilisation, whose glory lies, not in its uniformity, but in its diversity and richness, to which the small nations have also made their contribution.

From the start, Mr. Churchill's political career been marked by a high moral
180 purpose, by magnanimity and generosity. *Parcere subjectis*- "Spare the conquered"- has always been his motto. No thought of appeasement in weakness, but a generous understanding in victory.

185 I belong to a generation which first "spotted" Churchill at the time of the Boer War. We were pro-Boer in those days and did not support him. But he nevertheless made a deep impression on us when, in his maiden speech in Parliament, he praised the Boers as good-hearted enemies and added: "If I were a Boer, I hope I should be fighting in the field." He won our hearts for all time
190 when, as a young Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies under Campbell-Bannerman he carried through self-government for the Boer Republics- and thereby laid the foundation for reconciliation which brought its reward in later years, when the Union of South Africa, led by the same Boer generals fought by Britain's side in the two World Wars.

195 He, more than any other of Germany's enemies, acknowledged her military prowess in the First World War. And it is tragic that the closing words of that acknowledgement-"Surely, Germans, for History it is enough"-were not echoed in Germany itself. It was not enough for them. He wanted to see a
200 reconciliation between the German, French and British peoples, because he knew that without that it would be impossible to rebuild the glory of Europe.

Nor let us forget the part his magnanimity played in the negotiations which led to the creation of the Irish Free State, and the tribute that one of his greatest
205 opponents, Michael Collins paid, him- "Tell Winston we could never have done anything without him."

Even in those May days eight years ago, when he was given a doctor's mandate to save a patient at death's door, after his diagnosis and prescriptions had
210 previously been rejected, he uttered no reproaches. He said instead: "Of this I am quite sure, that if we open a quarrel between the past and the present, we shall find that we have lost the future."

When France fell he did not use hard words. On the contrary, he strove to
215 infuse her people with new courage by affirming his steadfast faith in the undying greatness of France.

It is this greatness of soul in the hour of tribulation, this assuredness of victory, founded on the knowledge of his own people's hidden strength and his study of
220 history, that we shall never, never forget.

Mr. Churchill once wrote between the wars an inscription for a war memorial

to be erected in France. It runs thus: "In war, resolution. In defeat, defiance. In
225 victory, magnanimity. In peace, goodwill." It was not accepted, but Mr.
Churchill has since written these words himself on the pages of history.

In war, resolution: "We shall not flag or fail -we shall go on to the end."

230 In defeat, defiance: "What kind of a people do they think we are" as he said to
the Japanese. Or to Hitler: "You do your worst and we will do our best."

In victory, magnanimity; in peace, goodwill "It is the victors who must search
their hearts their glowing hours and be worthy by their nobility of the immense
235 forces that they wield."

It is this richness of emotion that reveals Churchill's greatness, and it had its
source in his school days. Hitler once declared that the battle was between Eton
and those who had been taught in the Adolf Hitler schools. "He has forgotten
240 Harrow" said Mr. Churchill.

Each year throughout the war, he drew new strength from revisiting his old
school and mingling with the new generation. He has acknowledged this debt
in one of his Harrow speeches: "I can see myself, as it seems but yesterday,
245 sitting a little boy here in these audiences, always feeling the thrill of your songs,
and feeling the glory of England and its history surrounding me and about me-
and always praying that the day might come when I should have the honour of
doing something to help forward the great association with which our lives have
been connected."

250 It is in these surroundings, against this background that we see the real
Churchill and understand the wealth of tradition behind the advice he once
gave the boys: "Never give in, never give in. Never, never, never, never give in
except to convictions of honour good sense."

255 It is his strength and his charm that he has so much of the boy in him still. He
has a youthfulness and openness of heart that are in harmony with all living
things and that brings him so near to us all.

260 Unless our eyes be opened and our minds awakened, how can we hope to shape
a new and better world?

In time there will arise one man who can perceive.

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The clash of mighty forces, which none would else believe, As though a nation's
fate in one man found reprieve.

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This was Bjørnson's salutation to Norway's first historian, to the spiritual leader
who set our feet on the road to full independence. It is, no less, a fitting
expression of all that we Norwegians owe to Winston Churchill.

Kilde

Churchill's visit to Norway- Speeches (J.W.Cappelens Forlag, Oslo, 1949 s.20-29)

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Emner

Takketale

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<https://www.virksommeord.no/tale/a-tribute-to-mr-churchill>

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