



To the University of Oslo

Taler

Winston Churchill

Dato

12 mai 1948

Sted

Universitetet i Oslo

Omstendigheter

Æresmiddag til Churchill

1 Mr. Rector, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I must say that I have to be very careful in listening to the oratory of Professor Worm-Muller, lest I should become conceited, but I must tell you that I have
5 this blessing vouchsafed me-that the more kindness I receive, the more humble I become. I know very well how vain it is for individuals to try to gather to themselves all the credit which really belongs to the great countries and nations whose virtues they had the opportunity at critical moments in world history to proclaim. I am often praised for having said that we would fight on alone, but
10 all my Cabinet would have torn me to pieces if I had not said so. Socialists, Tories, Liberals, there was only one view, and I would have torn myself to pieces too if I had differed from it.

I thank the Professor very much for all he has said and it is very gratifying to me
15 to see how very familiar he has made himself with all the kind of things I have been saying during the long years-right back to Boer War. I am very grateful indeed for all he has said

and for the extraordinary welcome you have given me and my wife here in Oslo,
20 the scene of that foul outrage and act of treachery, which ranks with the Massacre of Glencoe, the Sicilian Vespers and the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, as one of the black deeds of history. And now I am invited here to Oslo, associated in my mind with those terrible events, and all around I see charming people and smiling faces and offerings of gratitude which I wish I could have
25 done more to deserve.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have emerged from the most terrible of wars which

has yet been fought in the world. We fought for principles which are dear to the
30 great overwhelming majority of the human race. I cannot see why it is that we
should be anxious whether we shall enjoy the fruits of our victory and
deliverance. After all, how little it is we ask. We ask only the right to live in
peace and freedom, to bring up our children by our toil- toil of brain and toil
and sweat of hand- to bring them up and to give them a fair chance in the
35 world, to have our homes, to have a little grace and ease and culture. We do not
wish to harm anyone - who in Norway or who in Britain wishes to take
anybody's territory or freedom away? We have no wish to do so. But there are
certain fundamental rights of mankind, certain great principles and causes for
which we must always be ready to make the supreme sacrifice, as so many
40 Norwegians did in the great war which is now closed. We must always be ready
to make sacrifices for the great causes, for only in that way shall we be able to
keep our souls alive. Now I am one of those who hope for a favourable
outcome, and I believe gradually we shall get away from the hysteria which is a
feature, a symptom of the aftermath of every great war. I pray that that may be
45 so. And there may be a very bright and broad world around, if we can only get
clear of the past.

I have said in Holland that we must abandon all hatred. It is very hard for those
who have suffered humiliation and cruelty, and mourn the loss of the dear ones,
50 but I must assure you that we will not walk into the future unless we cut off the
shackles on our feet; we will not walk into the future if we drag behind us long
trails of old scores of justifiable vengeance that we have to pay off. There is not
enough life and strength in the human race for us all to pay our debts to one
another.

55 Another reflection which comes to me in my capacity as Doctor of Philosophy
and Doctor of History is the vanity of human calculation. We are told we must
be prudent, thrifty, careful, good at housekeeping, that we must look ahead,
and so on. That is all very well. But the calculators, the tyrants, who have based
60 themselves on calculation, have nearly always been proved wrong. Take the
instance of Admiral Darlan. There was a man who had the French navy in the
hollow of his hand; he had only to give the word to sail away to America, or to
the French colonies, and he would have gone there, carrying with him the title-
deeds of the France of the future, of free France. He would not have gone like
65 de Gaulle, only taking his gallant heart- an unconquerable heart- he would have
gone with a great force, the fourth largest navy in the world. But he cast it all

away by calculation. He thought that to become Minister of Marine would give him more power at the time; and so he lost all that he cared most about, and his life was cast away in shame, where it might have been long preserved in honour, through calculation.

Then there was Count Ciano, Mussolini's son-in-law, who said that to take France and England at the moment when France was beaten was a chance in five thousand years, and two years later he was facing firing squad. It does show how these very clever calculations did not come off. I have noticed in my long life, very long life- I suppose that I am by far and away the oldest person here, though I feel quite boyish when among the young men of the University- I have noticed the way in which human judgment is falsified. You may do a very wise thing and it may turn out most badly. You may do a foolish thing and it may save your life. I have seen these things happen. Not that I am recommending that you should deliberately choose to do unwise things or foolish things, but the fact remains that the problem of life is not presented to us as a simple calculation of what is wise and what is foolish. It is not, because judgments are falsified by events. The problem of life is presented to us on the plain clear issue of right and wrong, and if you will obey the promptings of your spirit or nature, when your conscience gives you such lights as may be granted, you will find that there is a way which is far safer in the long run than all the calculations of the most astute and clever politicians that have ever been made.

Now I am not venturing to dwell upon these great truths in order to pretend to you any superior virtue, because such a thing I should be ashamed to do in this kind and gallant company. But I have this feeling that we will only get out of our troubles, if individuals and nations at this stage act in accordance with what they really feel and believe, and march steadily forward along broad highroads which still exist, even in our ruined Europe, and along which the nations, in freedom and in peace, may move together and may establish that happier world which surely the toilers, the hard toiling masses have a right to enjoy, after all they have suffered and endured.

I thank you most cordially for the reception and for all that you have done for me. I wear the ring of the University on my finger. I shall be a marriage tie -though I regret that I must tell you that in this field I have a veritable harem of university degrees. But none has ever given me a ring, so it is to Oslo that I shall be true. I thank you most cordially for drinking my health, and wish good luck

to you all, good fortune to the people of Norway, and all prosperity and fame to the University of Oslo.

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Kilde

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

Emner

Frihet, Takketale

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<https://www.virksommeord.no/tale/to-the-university-of-oslo>

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