

CONSERVATIVE AND UNIONIST CENTRAL OFFICE

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Text of a speech by The Rt. Hon. Sir Winston Churchill, K.G., O.M., C.H., D.L., (Woodford), Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury, at the Conservative Party Annual Conference at Blackpool on Saturday, 9th October, 1954.

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S.S. When we were returned to power three years ago I asked that we might be judged not by promises but by results. I ask the same today and I ask it with the assurance based on facts and not merely on hopes.

The facts cannot be challenged. They are obvious and convincing. Both the position and prospects of Britain are decidedly better than they were when we became responsible in October 1951. In the vast, tumultuous world which towers up around us under the shadow of the nuclear age no single country can control its destiny alone. We have done our best. We have tried to govern with general consent and good will but we have not shrunk - and we shall not shrink - from doing unpopular things when convinced they are in the public interest. Today I can assert that both our material well-being at home and our influence and credit of all kinds abroad, show a marked advance.

Indeed I must say that we have done better than I dared to hope. If I may quote my broadcast during the Election: I said "Too much harm has been done in these last six years for it to be repaired in a few months. Too much money has been spent for us to be able to avoid another financial crisis. It will take all our national strength to stop the downhill slide and get us back on the level, and after that we shall have to work up". And a few weeks later when I had formed the Government I said: "We shall require at least three years before anyone can judge fairly whether we have made things better or worse". Well the three years have ended. We survey the scene without complacency but with growing confidence. We feel entitled to ask for your approval and encouragement both in what has been done and in the important work this Parliament still has to do.

I shall not attempt to describe in detail the series of improvements in the British position and prospects. It would take too long. I can only pick out the salient points. Thanks to wise and resolute financial policy and a lot of saying "No" we have restored national solvency. We are rebuilding the precious reserves which three years ago were draining away at an alarming rate. We are paying our way again and re-paying the dollar loans our predecessors contracted. There is a new spirit of confident endeavour in the land. Indeed you were right yesterday to acclaim the man to whom this solid and vital achievement is mainly due - Rab Butler, the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

In our administration we reversed or arrested the policy of the Socialist Government in many ways in order to give a freer rein to enterprise and effort. We let the traders trade and the builders build. Our aim has been freedom not control. The ration book has gone down the drain with the Identity card. Two-thirds of the wartime regulations we inherited have been scrapped. Form-filling has ceased to be our national pastime. ⁵⁰ [More people are at work than ever before. This year, as has been pithily said, our countrymen and women ate more, earned more, spent more, saved more than has ever happened before in our records.] No one has put this better than did Mr. Housebuilder Macmillan - Mr. Harold Macmillan - in his recent broadcast, and no band of friends and fellow workers are more capable than this great audience of impressing the truth upon the Electors by personal exertion, and may I add through the powerful political organisation which under Lord Woolton is now at the service of Tory democracy. And all has been done, let me remind you, with a House of Commons majority of only 16, now 18. This achievement - incredible as it would have seemed before it happened - is due to the devotion of our Members of Parliament and to the excellent arrangements of our Whips Office under the tireless vigilance of Patrick Buchan-Hepburn.

/This afternoon

This afternoon it is my task to take a general view. The business of Government has become vastly more complicated since I first meddled in public affairs. In a free country everyone has the right to find fault with everything he thinks is wrong and to express himself to all who care to listen. Powerful organs of comment and criticism exist to form and spread opinion daily, and almost hourly. There are few mistakes or shortcomings which do not get the attention they deserve and this healthy process, while it increases the severity of the Ministerial ordeal, also brings about that constant correction on which the progress of human society depends.

I feel we may be sure that a respectful verdict will be granted to our Government by history. And even if we are not mentioned we may console ourselves with the reflection that history has been described by Gibbon as little more than a register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind. So perhaps our modern contribution will be overlooked. I must say that I have had throughout a feeling that Britain, and also the quivering world stand in need of a breathing space. This is not a time for violent ideological convulsions. The productive forces which are now working have only to be allowed to unfold and grow in a calm and healthy atmosphere to create material well-being for all to a degree never before within practical reach. The process is cumulative. A cog-wheel is mounted this afternoon. It goes on turning for years, helping to make things for us. Let the productive forces run in fullness and in freedom. Don't let it all be spoiled by class hatred or doctrinal pedantry.

/We live

We live in a land where Party Government has ruled for centuries. As the Liberal Party has suffered misfortune from the general acceptance of so many of its ideals, the two-Party system of Conservatives and Socialists is likely to last some time. Naturally there is rivalry and partisanship. There are immense doctrinal differences between them. They hold that free enterprise is unfair. Our view is that the Socialist economy is fallacious. Passions are excited. Powerful organisations search for points of difference, work up controversies, and attack each other. But as each Party is supported by more than 12,000,000 voters they must have a great deal in common. British Conservatives and Socialists mingle together in daily life without the same kind of bitterness which so often afflicts the internal politics of other countries.

When necessary for the safety of our Island we work together. This happens not only in wartime but as you saw a few years ago we supported all the necessary measures taken by the Socialist Government in foreign policy and defence, even though we thought their domestic policy disastrous. And here I will say that Mr. Attlee and Mr. Morrison and the majority of their followers strengthened by the leaders of the Trade Unions, have shown firmness and consistency on many important occasions in dealing with our foreign policy for the broad continuity of which they have unquestionable responsibility.

I am sorry Mr. Attlee did not have more success with his trip abroad,

Certainly the politicians said several things which were not helpful to our affairs, but we are all very glad they came back safely, and we hope they will do better next time. Foreign nations, friendly and not so friendly, should realise that there is a core of strength and union in our Island people and throughout the British Commonwealth which can and must be counted upon in all the difficulties and anxieties of the present time.

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It is in this setting that I will now proclaim the guiding aims and principles of the Conservative Party. We stand for the maintenance of freedom, national and individual, in accordance with the well tried laws and customs of our Island. We hold, as the Home Secretary said yesterday, that the people should own the State and not the State own the people. As a foundation for this we seek to develop a property-owning democracy. We believe that more and more people should be owners as well as earners. We like to see families living in their own homes and we are making it possible for ever larger number to do so. We welcome the increasing tendency of large industrial firms to introduce profit-sharing and co-partnership schemes, thus enabling the workers to become the owners of a share in their work. Our desire is to stimulate thrift. We rejoice that the personal savings last year were nearly £900,000,000 compared with £100,000,000 in 1950. We believe that a continuing rise in the standard of living in harmony with the way of life which the British people want, is the most practical answer to the mean-minded equalitarianism that grudges greater earnings to anyone but themselves.

We are resolved firmly to maintain those basic standards which are dictated by the humanities and below which no one must fall. We seek the means to raise them progressively as the years go by. This can only be done by exceptional enterprise, diligence, exertion, invention and skill. The genius of our race in these latter qualities is today recognised all over the world. Incentive and opportunity must be our watchwords. There is an expression widely used in industry which aptly illustrates my thought. "Differentials", the term I have in mind, provide recognition of extra skill, responsibility or effort and are therefore one of the keys to progress. Our industrial eminence as a nation owes much to the famous craftsmanship of our workers. Rewards for extra skill or effort have had in the past, and still have, an important part to play in stimulating an increase in the volume and quality of our output. It is on this increase that the continued process of raising our general standard and the advance of the main body of our society alike depend.

/I now come

I now come to the grievous injustice and hardship which was inflicted on the Old Age Pensioners and others in similar positions by the shrinkage in what money can buy during the reign of the Socialist Party from 1945 to 1951. We have only so far partially remedied this evil by the half-crown added by the Chancellor in 1952. We are going to complete our task as soon as we receive the report of the expert Committee which has for some time been at work upon the problems of old age among what has become a longer living population.

It is the people under 50 whose lives have been prolonged by the discoveries of medical science and the improvement of hygiene. Excuse this diversion.

✓The old age

The Old Age Pensions will be a principal feature of the next Session of Parliament. It seems to me extraordinary that the Socialist Party during the six years when they spent so much money and when they represented themselves as bringing about a collectivist Utopia - the dawn of a new world - should until a few months before the last Election have looked on helplessly at a diminution of upwards of 5/- in the true value of the pensions of the Old Age and other Pensioners. Reckless inflation of the currency inflicted this loss of 5/- a week upon the very class one might have thought they would have found themselves bound above all to protect. Now they pose as their champions. Even this morning, says "Old Age Pensioners", they are the most helpless section of the community. But when they had the power for six long years they were guilty of careless and unfair neglect. They were so full of airy

schemes for assailing wealth and its creative enterprise that they forgot about the plight of the aged. While the Socialists nearly reduced Britain to bankruptcy in the pursuit of visionary schemes of nationalization and other forms of Ground Nuts, while their eyes were fixed upon distant mirages, they allowed this misfortune to develop at their feet.

It was not only a misfortune but an injustice. Under the system of National Insurance, with the beginnings of which I was associated in my Liberal days and which as Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer I made begin at 65 instead of 70, under this system everybody contributes and a serious and prolonged fall in what they can buy in return for their contributions is morally a breach of faith to a system of compulsory thrift.

It is quite true that there is also the system of National Assistance. This was first started by the Conservatives in 1934 and it has grown steadily under all Governments ever since. It is still indispensable as a measure of humanity to the weak, unfortunate and poor. But the guiding purpose of national insurance - and I am speaking about what I know - has throughout been to substitute organised State aided and Employer aided thrift for grants of assistance based inevitably on a Means Test. A society built on and around national insurance and private thrift is sounder healthier and ranks far higher than one based on public assistance and the Means Test, which should be reserved for emergencies and exceptions. That at any rate is the policy of Tory Democracy and Liberalism.

Since power came to us three years ago we have already sought as I have said, to mitigate the evil by raising the pensions. Now the Chancellor of the Exchequer has sufficiently restored our solvency and prosperity to be able to remove the injustice inflicted upon Old Age Pensioners and others during the Socialist regime. That we are going to do.

I should not speak in terms of such severity about our political opponents - after all, I am sure they did not mean to be callous - it was just muddleheadedness - were it not for the fact that their Party machines are deliberately trying to pose as the gaurdians and saviours of the Old Age Pensioners, and to throw the blame on us for what they did themselves.

You have heard the Minister of Pensions speaking in detail on this sublect to the Conference on last Thursday afternoon. He is a master of this subject, to which he has most earnestly devoted himself. I have great confidence in his judgement. He will handle in Parliament next Session the complicated legislation required.

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Now I must ask you to look abroad and survey with me some aspects of the world scene, in which we have a part to play and on which all our lives depend.

450 An attempt is being made by a large section of the Socialist Party, spurred on by Communist propaganda, to gain votes and popularity by reviving and inflaming the feelings of bitterness and anger which were aroused in all our minds by the frightful atrocities of which Hitler was the cause and moving spirit. They would never have taken place if he had not made himself dictator of Germany. Peoples who let themselves fall into the grip of dictatorship and totalitarian tyranny cannot escape the consequences of their carelessness and folly and heavily have the Germans suffered for them. The foundation and prime purpose of the British and American constitutions - and indeed of the French constitution - is to safeguard themselves against falling under the rule of dictators or oligarchies. That is no longer our British problem. We have others.

But the misdeeds or mistakes of peoples stand apart on a totally different footing to the crimes committed in their name by dictators, the tyranny of whose personal will-power is obtained by violence and enforced by fear. It would be disastrous to the human race if in learning the hard lessons of experience, they were to let their minds and actions be dominated by feelings of hatred and revenge against whole nations or races because of the deeds of a tyrant by whom they had been misled, bullied and subjugated. As the great Burke said "I do not know the method of drawing up an indictment against a whole people". In mighty, highly organized communities, many millions of ordinary men and women are swept along by events and authority and by the feeling that they cannot desert their country.

/I believe

I believe myself that the mass of the people in all countries are kind, decent folk who wish to live their lives in neighbourly fashion with their fellow men and women. Naught but ruin awaits the world if communities of scores of millions are taught and allow themselves to journey along dominated by feelings of hatred against other vast collections of bewildered mortals. Let the dictators whose wickedness wrought the fearful deeds - deeds which would never have happened without their despotic personal power - carry their awful record into history. Let Hitler take his shame to Hell. Let the peoples extend the hand of friendship and forgiveness to each other and walk forward together through the mysteries of life in freedom, justice and peace.

~~But it is not only to Germany and Hitler that I apply these thoughts in the present momentous crisis in world fortunes and perhaps in the fate of mankind. Stalin was for many years Dictator of Russia and the more I have studied his career the more I am shocked by the terrible mistakes he made and the utter ruthlessness to men and masses with which he acted. Stalin was our ally against Hitler when Russia was invaded, but when Hitler had been destroyed Stalin made himself our principal object of dread. After our joint victory became certain his conduct divided the world again. He seemed to be carried away by the dream of world domination. He actually reduced a third of Europe to a Soviet satellite condition under compulsory Communism. These were heartbreaking events after all we had gone through. But a year and a half ago Stalin died - and ever since that event I have cherished the hope that there is a new outlook in Russia, a new hope of peaceful co-existence with the Russian nation and that it is our duty patiently and daringly, to make sure whether there is such a change or not.~~ It is certainly the interest of the Russian people, who have experienced a terrible half-century of war, revolution and famine, to have an easier and more prosperous generation with more food, more fun, and more friends.

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While I have life and strength I shall persevere in this, though I feel with Mr. Eden that the Soviet attitude about Germany and Austria is not encouraging. But there is one risk that we must never run. Our policy is "Peace through Strength". ^{Sc} We must never willingly or wittingly run the risk of "Subjugation through weakness".

Our strength can only be founded on the unity, precautions and vigilance of the free nations of the world. ^{Sc} This community of States and peoples, comprising the greater part of mankind, has as its vanguard the Nine Powers which met in London last week under the Presidency of our Chairman, Mr. Eden. ^{app} For the policy of this country, the Cabinet, who were consulted at every stage, bears full responsibility. I think Lord Beaverbrook has been rather unfair in doing me out of my share of the blame. But there is no doubt that the initiative which led to the London Conference sprang from our Foreign Secretary who journeyed round Europe to make it possible. Without his energy and boldness the London Conference would not have taken place and without his knowledge, experience, tact and skill, it could never have reached its favourable conclusion. I profoundly believe that this Agreement may well become a monument and a milestone in our march towards that peaceful co-existence during which the lasting peace which is our hearts desire may find its sure foundation. This, if it is fairly treated, will be indeed the most important of the series of successes which have distinguished the recent conduct of the Foreign Office.

The conventional military forces of which the N.A.T.O. Powers dispose are of course much fewer than those of Russia and the Soviets have no need to fear their attack. In fact there is no doubt that Soviet Russia could overrun the whole of Europe and make the life of the British Isles impossible, but for the fact that the United States possesses today that superiority in nuclear weapons which while it is maintained will be a decisive deterrent against a Communist aggression.

/I must

I must remind you of what I said to you a year ago:-

~~I~~"I am sure that the decisions taken by the Socialist Government, which were supported by us at the time, and are now being carried forward steadfastly and soberly by Her Majesty's Government, constitute the best chance - and indeed I think it a good chance - of getting through this awful period of anxiety without a world catastrophe.

We at any rate are going to adhere faithfully to them and do our utmost to promote the formation of the European Army with a strong contingent of Germans in it. We like the Americans, shall maintain our forces in Europe, thus restoring the French balance of equality with our German associates.

If E.D.C. should not be adopted by the French, we shall have no choice in prudence but to fall in with some new arrangement which will join the strength of Germany to the Western Allies through some rearrangement of the forces of NATO."

That is in effect what we are doing now through the combination of the Brussels Treaty of 1948 with the machinery of NATO through which the United States bring their mighty and indeed overwhelming power to the aid and protection of Europe. Without this aid on the continent, the advance of Soviet Communism which has already swallowed the satellite nations, could continue irresistibly by infiltration and intrigue with force in the background until despair produced a landslide into submission.

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8 [I have always thought that the growth of ever closer ties with the United States, to whom we and our sister Commonwealth/^{members}are bound, by language, literature and law, is the supreme factor in our future and that together we may make the world safe for ourselves and everybody else.] There is no other case of a nation arriving at the summit of world power, seeking no territorial gain, but earnestly resolved to use her strength and wealth in the cause of progress and freedom. Had this conception been visible to the American Governments fifty years ago we all, themselves included, might have escaped the two fearful World Wars which have brought such misery upon our generation and made the twentieth century on a far larger scale the most tragic period since the Fall of the Roman Empire, fifteen hundred years ago. [For America to withdraw into isolation would condemn all Europe to Russian Communist subjugation and our famous and beloved island to death and ruin. And yet six months ago a politician who has held office in a British Cabinet and who one day aspires to become Leader of the Labour Party did not hesitate to tell the Americans to "go it alone".]

9 S.C.U. One cannot imagine any more fatal disaster than that this evil Counsellor should be taken at his word. There is already in the United States no little talk of a return to isolation and the policy is described as "Fortress America". We may however be sure that all the strongest, wisest forces over there, irrespective of Party, will not allow the great Republic to be turned from the path of right and duty and that they will disdain the taunts of impudence as effectively as they confront toil and danger. [I have been for many years in close relation with leading figures in American life and Government and I can assure you that true and friendly comprehension between our kindred nations has rarely reached a higher standard than at this London Conference, over which Mr. Eden presided with so much influence and distinction. *applause*]

The particular task upon which we have been engaged is not yet

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done and many difficulties and complications lie ahead, ~~but~~ I have good hopes that if the Free Nations persevere soberly and patiently together, we may yet rescue the future of mankind.

(12) S.U.

THE END

(11) - the work as reported under agreement in present circumstances - refers to Conference by the country of Dr. Churchill in France they seek further ~~and~~ Conference - out of the picture.

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