

MR. CHURCHILL'S OTTAWA SPEECH

Text of an address by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, the Right Honourable Winston S. Churchill, delivered at a banquet given in his honour by the Government of Canada in Ottawa, on January 14, 1952.

Your Excellency, Prime Minister, my lords and gentlemen: I am indeed honoured that you should receive me in Ottawa with so much kindness. I came here first more than fifty years ago to give a lecture about the Boer War. A little later on I was Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, in a rather radical Government, when Sir Wilfrid Laurier came to England, and I saw a lot of that august Canadian statesman. He brought with him a young secretary named Mackenzie King. I made a lifelong friendship with him and I shared my grief with all Canada, and indeed all the free world, at his death after so many years of faithful and skillful service to the great causes which we uphold today.

The Prime Minister of Canada and his Cabinet have welcomed me and my colleagues, who are one-quarter of the British Cabinet, not only with Canadian hospitality, but with that sense of true comradeship facing difficulties together, which often makes it possible for these difficulties to be overcome.

I am very glad also to see here tonight my old friend, Mr. George Drew, and I am truly sorry that I cannot yet visit Toronto where I have long been invited to receive a degree. Mr. Drew is the leader of the Opposition. Well, I have been a leader of the Opposition, too. In a free country one is always allowed to have an Opposition. In England we even pay the leader of the Opposition a salary of £2,000 a year, but that is nothing to what you do here. He is paid this salary to make sure the Government is kept up to the mark. I have no doubt Mr. Attlee, whom you welcomed less than a year ago, will devote himself to his task with the zeal which, under any totalitarian system, might well lead to Siberia or worse. However, we in the free nations have our own way of life, and are able to keep separate, except perhaps at election times, those things which affect the life of the state and those which merely decide what party gets into office.

It is ten years almost to a week since I last came to see you in Ottawa. That was indeed a memorable occasion for me with all the burdens I had to bear. It was also an inspiring but formidable moment in the war. With the entry of the United States into the struggle, the pathway to victory seemed, and in fact was, open and sure. But I bore in my heart and conscience the knowledge, which I could not share with you, of immense, shattering disasters which were about to fall upon us throughout the East, as the inevitable consequence of the Japanese onslaught in vast regions where we were weak and ill-prepared to meet it.

I knew and I could feel beforehand, the heavy blows that must fall upon us, and the perils to Singapore, the Dutch East Indies, to Burma and to India itself. I had no feeling of self-reproach for not being ready then, because, between the fall of France in 1940 and Hitler's invasion of Russia in 1941, it had taken Britain and the British Empire—I hope you do not mind my using the word; it is quite a good word in its proper place—it had taken Britain and the British Empire fighting alone, every scrap of our life and strength to keep the flag of freedom flying until we were joined, as I was sure we should be, by the mighty allies who came to us. But while I spoke to you ten years ago gaily and confidently, and was sure that final victory would be gained, I felt like one about to come under the lash wielded by a strong and merciless arm.

I knew that many months must pass before the United States Navy could regain the control of the Pacific Ocean. I knew that that meant a terrible period