

## Sinews of Peace, Winston Churchill

March 5, 1946, Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri

### Extracts

I am glad to come to Westminster College this afternoon, and am complimented that you should give me a degree. The name "Westminster" is somehow familiar to me [laughter and applause].

5 I seem to have heard of it before. Indeed, it was at Westminster that I received a very large part of my education in politics, dialectic, rhetoric, and one or two other things [laughter]. In fact we have both been educated at the same, or similar, or, at any rate, kindred establishments.

10 It is also an honour, perhaps almost unique, for a private visitor to be introduced to an academic audience by the President of the United States. Amid his heavy burdens, duties, and responsibilities — unsought but not recoiled from — the President has travelled a thousand miles to dignify and magnify our meeting here to-day [applause] and to give me an opportunity of addressing this kindred nation, as well as my own countrymen across the ocean, and perhaps some other countries too. The President has told you that it is his wish, as I am sure it is yours, that I should have full liberty to give my true and faithful counsel in these anxious and baffling times. I shall certainly avail myself of this freedom, and feel the more right to do so because any private ambitions I may have cherished in my younger days have been satisfied beyond my wildest dreams [laughter]. Let me, however, make it clear that I have no official mission or status of any kind, and that I speak only for myself. There is nothing here but what you see [laughter and applause]. [ ... ]

20 It would nevertheless be wrong and imprudent to entrust the secret knowledge or experience of the atomic bomb, which the United States, Great Britain, and Canada now share, to the world organisation, while it is still in its infancy. It would be criminal madness to cast it adrift in this still agitated and un-united world [applause]. No one in any country has slept less well in their beds because this knowledge and the method and the raw materials to apply it, are at present largely retained in American hands. I do not believe we should all have slept so soundly had the positions been reversed and if some Communist or neo-Fascist State monopolised for the time being these dread agencies. The fear of them alone might easily have been used to enforce totalitarian systems upon the free democratic world, with consequences appalling to human imagination. God has willed that this shall not be and we have at least a breathing space to set our house in order before this peril has to be encountered: and even then, if no effort is spared, we should still possess so formidable a superiority as to impose effective deterrents upon its employment, or threat of employment, by others. Ultimately, when the essential brotherhood of man is truly embodied and expressed in a world organisation with all the necessary practical safeguards to make it effective, these powers would naturally be confided to that world organisation. [ ... ]

40 All this means that the people of any country have the right, and should have the power by constitutional action, by free unfettered elections, with secret ballot, to choose or change the character or form of government under which they dwell; that freedom of speech and thought should reign; that courts of justice, independent of the executive, unbiased by any party, should administer laws which have received the broad assent of large majorities or are consecrated by time and custom. Here are the title deeds of freedom which should lie in every cottage home. Here is the message of the British and American peoples to mankind. Let us preach what we practise — let us practise what we preach [applause].

50 I have now stated the two great dangers which menace the homes of the people: War and Tyranny. I have not yet spoken of poverty and privation which are in many cases the prevailing anxiety. But if the dangers of war and tyranny are removed, there is no doubt that science and co-operation can bring in the next few years to the world, certainly in the next few decades newly taught in the sharpening school of war, an expansion of material well-being beyond anything that has yet occurred in human experience. Now, at this sad and breathless moment, we are plunged in the hunger and distress which are the aftermath of our

stupendous struggle; but this will pass and may pass quickly, and there is no reason except human folly or sub-human crime which should deny to all the nations the inauguration and enjoyment of an age of plenty. I have often used words which I learned fifty years ago from a great Irish-American orator, a friend of mine, Mr. Bourke Cockran. “There is enough for all. The earth is a generous mother; she will provide in plentiful abundance food for all her children if they will but cultivate her soil in justice and in peace.” [applause] So far I feel that we are in full agreement.

Now, while still pursuing the method of realising our overall strategic concept, I come to the crux of what I have travelled here to say. Neither the sure prevention of war, nor the continuous rise of world organisation will be gained without what I have called the fraternal association of the English-speaking peoples [applause]. This means a special relationship between the British Commonwealth and Empire and the United States. This is no time for generalities, and I will venture to be precise. Fraternal association requires not only the growing friendship and mutual understanding between our two vast but kindred systems of society, but the continuance of the intimate relationship between our military advisers, leading to common study of potential dangers, the similarity of weapons and manuals of instruction, and to the interchange of officers and cadets at technical colleges [applause]. It should carry with it the continuance of the present facilities for mutual security by the joint use of all Naval and Air Force bases in the possession of either country all over the world. This would perhaps double the mobility of the American Navy and Air Force. It would greatly expand that of the British Empire Forces and it might well lead, if and as the world calms down, to important financial savings. Already we use together a large number of islands; more may well be entrusted to our joint care in the near future. [ ... ]

There is however an important question we must ask ourselves. Would a special relationship between the United States and the British Commonwealth be inconsistent with our over-riding loyalties to the World Organisation? I reply that, on the contrary, it is probably the only means by which that organisation will achieve its full stature and strength. There are already the special United States relations with Canada which I have just mentioned, and there are the special relations between the United States and the South American Republics. We British have our twenty years Treaty of Collaboration and Mutual Assistance with Soviet Russia. I agree with Mr. Bevin, the Foreign Secretary of Great Britain, that it might well be a fifty years Treaty so far as we are concerned. We aim at nothing but mutual assistance and collaboration [with Russia—applause]. The British have an alliance with Portugal unbroken since 1384, and which produced fruitful results at critical moments in the late war. [ ... ]

A shadow has fallen upon the scenes so lately lighted by the Allied victory. Nobody knows what Soviet Russia and its Communist international organisation intends to do in the immediate future, or what are the limits, if any, to their expansive and proselytising tendencies. I have a strong admiration and regard for the valiant Russian people and for my wartime comrade, Marshal Stalin. There is deep sympathy and goodwill in Britain — and I doubt not here also — towards the peoples of all the Russias and a resolve to persevere through many differences and rebuffs in establishing lasting friendships. We understand the Russian need to be secure on her western frontiers by the removal of all possibility of German aggression. We welcome Russia to her rightful place among the leading nations of the world. We welcome her flag upon the seas. Above all, we welcome constant, frequent and growing contacts between the Russian people and our own people on both sides of the Atlantic. It is my duty however, for I am sure you would wish me to state the facts as I see them to you, to place before you certain facts about the present position in Europe.

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in many cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow. Athens alone — Greece with its

immortal glories — is free to decide its future at an election under British, American and  
105 French observation. The Russian-dominated Polish Government has been encouraged to make  
enormous and wrongful inroads upon Germany, and mass expulsions of millions of Germans  
on a scale grievous and undreamed-of are now taking place. The Communist parties, which  
were very small in all these Eastern States of Europe, have been raised to pre-eminence and  
power far beyond their numbers and are seeking everywhere to obtain totalitarian control.  
110 Police governments are prevailing in nearly every case, and so far, except in Czechoslovakia,  
there is no true democracy.

Turkey and Persia are both profoundly alarmed and disturbed at the claims which are being  
made upon them and at the pressure being exerted by the Moscow Government. An attempt is  
being made by the Russians in Berlin to build up a quasi-Communist party in their zone of  
115 Occupied Germany by showing special favours to groups of left-wing German leaders. At the  
end of the fighting last June, the American and British Armies withdrew westwards, in  
accordance with an earlier agreement, to a depth at some points of 150 miles upon a front of  
nearly four hundred miles, in order to allow our Russian allies to occupy this vast expanse of  
territory which the Western Democracies had conquered.

120 If now the Soviet Government tries, by separate action, to build up a pro-Communist  
Germany in their areas, this will cause new serious difficulties in the British and American  
zones, and will give the defeated Germans the power of putting themselves up to auction  
between the Soviets and the Western Democracies. Whatever conclusions may be drawn from  
these facts-and facts they are-this is certainly not the Liberated Europe we fought to build up.  
125 Nor is it one which contains the essentials of permanent peace.

The safety of the world requires a new unity in Europe, from which no nation should be  
permanently outcast. It is from the quarrels of the strong parent races in Europe that the world  
wars we have witnessed, or which occurred in former times, have sprung. Twice in our own  
lifetime we have seen the United States, against their wishes and their traditions, against  
130 arguments, the force of which it is impossible not to comprehend, drawn by irresistible forces,  
into these wars in time to secure the victory of the good cause, but only after frightful  
slaughter and devastation had occurred. Twice the United States has had to send several  
millions of its young men across the Atlantic to find the war; but now war can find any  
nation, wherever it may dwell between dusk and dawn. Surely we should work with conscious  
135 purpose for a grand pacification of Europe, within the structure of the United Nations and in  
accordance with its Charter. That I feel is an open cause of policy of very great importance.

In front of the iron curtain which lies across Europe are other causes for anxiety. [ ... ] These  
are sombre facts for anyone to have to recite on the morrow of a victory gained by so much  
splendid comradeship in arms and in the cause of freedom and democracy; but we should be  
140 most unwise not to face them squarely while time remains.

The outlook is also anxious in the Far East and especially in Manchuria. The Agreement  
which was made at Yalta, to which I was a party, was extremely favourable to Soviet Russia,  
but it was made at a time when no one could say that the German war might not extend all  
through the summer and autumn of 1945 and when the Japanese war was expected to last for  
145 a further 18 months from the end of the German war. In this country you are all so well-  
informed about the Far East, and such devoted friends of China, that I do not need to expatiate  
on the situation there.

I have felt bound to portray the shadow which, alike in the west and in the east, falls upon the  
world. I was a high minister at the time of the Versailles Treaty and a close friend of Mr.  
150 Lloyd-George, who was the head of the British delegation at Versailles. I did not myself agree  
with many things that were done, but I have a very strong impression in my mind of that  
situation, and I find it painful to contrast it with that which prevails now. In those days there  
were high hopes and unbounded confidence that the wars were over, and that the League of  
Nations would become all-powerful. I do not see or feel that same confidence or even the  
155 same hopes in the haggard world at the present time.

On the other hand I repulse the idea that a new war is inevitable; still more that it is imminent. It is because I am sure that our fortunes are still in our own hands and that we hold the power to save the future, that I feel the duty to speak out now that I have the occasion and the opportunity to do so [applause]. I do not believe that Soviet Russia desires war. What they  
160 desire is the fruits of war and the indefinite expansion of their power and doctrines. But what we have to consider here today while time remains, is the permanent prevention of war and the establishment of conditions of freedom and democracy as rapidly as possible in all countries. Our difficulties and dangers 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  
165 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.

From what I have seen of our Russian friends and Allies during the war, I am convinced that there is nothing they admire so much as strength, and there is nothing for which they have less respect than for weakness, especially military weakness. For that reason the old doctrine of a  
170 balance of power is unsound. We cannot afford, if we can help it, to work on narrow margins, offering temptations to a trial of strength. If the Western Democracies stand together in strict adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter, their influence for furthering those principles will be immense and no one is likely to molest them. If however they become divided or falter in their duty and if these all-important years are allowed to slip away then  
175 indeed catastrophe may overwhelm us all.

Last time I saw it all coming and cried aloud to my own fellow-countrymen and to the world, but no one paid any attention. Up till the year 1933 or even 1935, Germany might have been saved from the awful fate which has overtaken her and we might all have been spared the miseries Hitler let loose upon mankind. There never was a war in all history easier to prevent  
180 by timely action than the one which has just desolated such great areas of the globe. It could have been prevented in my belief without the firing of a single shot, and Germany might be powerful, prosperous and honoured to-day; but no one would listen and one by one we were all sucked into the awful whirlpool. We surely must not let that happen again [prolonged applause]. This can only be achieved by reaching now, in 1946, a good understanding on all  
185 points with Russia under the general authority of the United Nations Organisation and by the maintenance of that good understanding through many peaceful years, by the world instrument, supported by the whole strength of the English-speaking world and all its connections. There is the solution which I respectfully offer to you in this Address to which I have given the title "The Sinews of Peace".

Let no man underrate the abiding power of the British Empire and Commonwealth [applause]. Because you see the 46 millions in our island harassed about their food supply, of which they only grow one half, even in war-time, or because we have difficulty in restarting our industries and export trade after six years of passionate war effort, do not suppose that we shall not come through these dark years of privation as we have come through the glorious  
195 years of agony [applause], or that half a century from now, you will not see 70 or 80 millions of Britons spread about the world and united in defence of our traditions, our way of life, and of the world causes which you and we espouse [applause]. If the population of the English-speaking Commonwealths be added to that of the United States with all that such co-operation implies in the air, on the sea, all over the globe and in science and in industry, and in moral  
200 force, there will be no quivering, precarious balance of power to offer its temptation to ambition or adventure. On the contrary, there will be an overwhelming assurance of security [applause]. If we adhere faithfully to the Charter of the United Nations and walk forward in sedate and sober strength seeking no one's land or treasure, seeking to lay no arbitrary control upon the thoughts of men; if all British moral and material forces and convictions are joined  
205 with your own in fraternal association, the high-roads of the future will be clear, not only for us but for all, not only for our time, but for a century to come.