

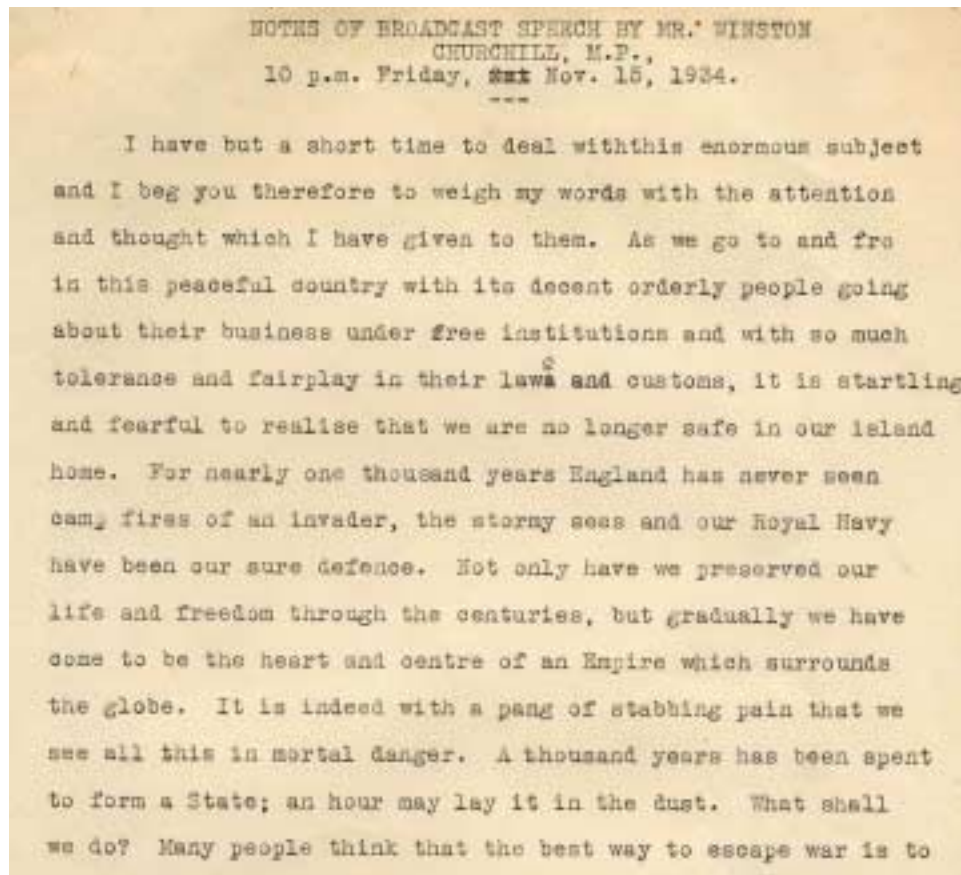
Winston Churchill - The Greatest Briton

On a recent BBC poll Winston Churchill was voted the Greatest Briton, mainly for his efforts during the Second World War.

During the 1930s, Sir Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill (1874-1965) was the foremost opponent of appeasement of Germany. At the time, with fresh memories of the First World War, the public did not wish to listen. However, by September 1939 Britain was at war with Germany and in May 1940, Churchill became Prime Minister. His Premiership brought a new energy to the organisation of the war effort. His stirring speeches and public visits helped galvanise public opinion to continue the fight against Nazism. His leadership was particularly vital in 1940-41, the period between the Nazi conquest of much of Europe and the entry into the war of Russia and America.

The House of Lords Record Office (the Parliamentary Archives) contains a number of documents relating to Churchill during his "Wilderness Years" and his time as Prime Minister during the War. This is an exhibition of just a few of those documents.

Document 1: Extract of typescript notes of a speech by Winston Churchill broadcast on BBC radio, 15 November 1934 (LG/G/4/5/7)



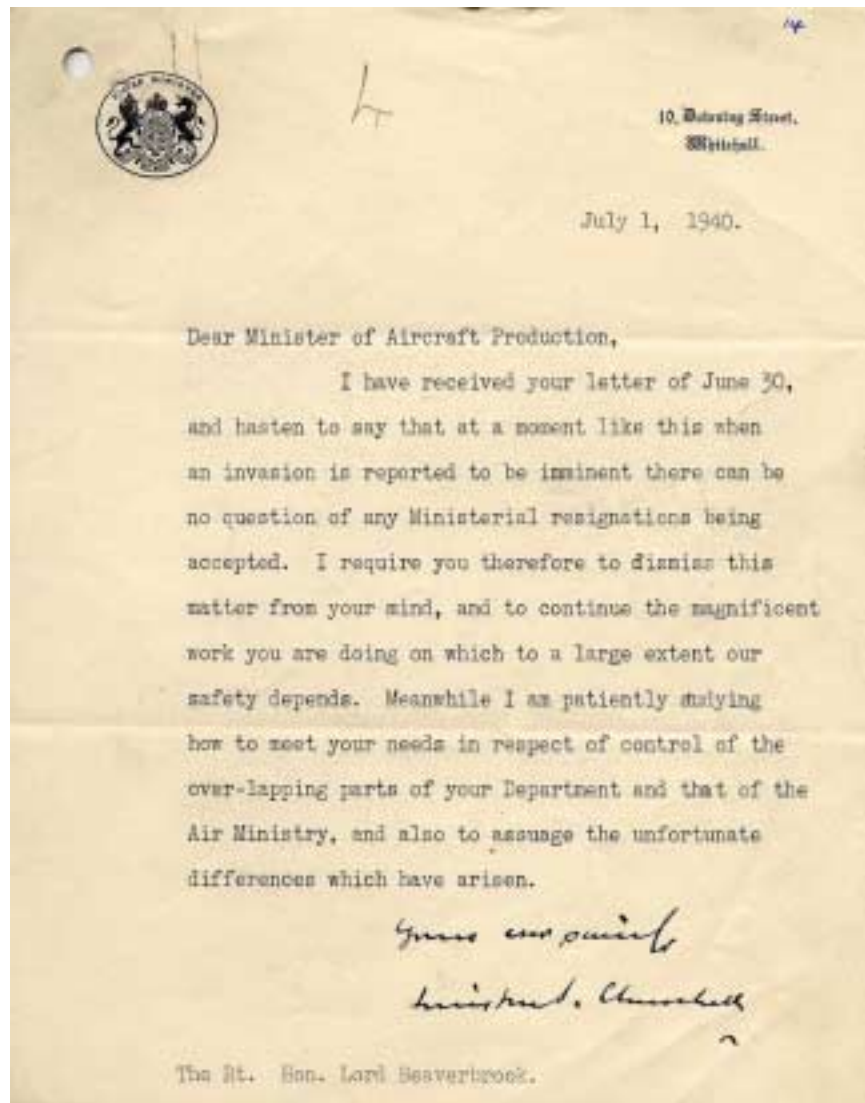
This speech indicates that Churchill recognised the threat from Nazism as early as 1934 - just one year after Hitler came to power, and five years before the outbreak of war. Later in the speech, Churchill states how he would deal with the threat.

"You have heard the old doctrine of the balance of power. I don't accept it. Anything like a balance of power in Europe will lead to war. Great wars usually come only when both States think they have good hopes of victory. Peace must be founded on preponderance; there is safety in numbers. If there were 5 or 6 on each side, there might be a frightful trial of strength, but if there were 8 or 10 on one side and only one or two upon the other, and if the collective armed forces on one side were 3 or 4 times as large as the other, then there will be no war."

For a full transcript of this document see below: Appendix 1

This document is among the political papers of David Lloyd-George (LG). The catalogue of these papers is currently available on-line on the Access to Archives web-site (<http://www.a2a.pro.gov.uk>).

Document 2: Letter from Winston Churchill to Lord Beaverbrook, 1 July 1940 (BBK/D/414)



Churchill created Lord Beaverbrook Minister of Aircraft Production in May 1940. Beaverbrook brought energy and new methods to the department and, by substantially increasing the output of aircraft, helped to ensure victory in the Battle of Britain. However, his methods led to disputes with colleagues, which led Beaverbrook to threaten Churchill with resignation several times. This letter is in response to one such threat. Beaverbrook continued as Minister of Aircraft Production until he was created Minister of State in May 1941.

This document is from one of twelve files in the Beaverbrook archive of correspondence with Churchill, 1940-45 (BBK/D/414-425).

Document 3: Typescript of a speech by Winston Churchill broadcast on 'The Home Service Programme' (BBC radio), 9pm, 22 June 1941 (BBK/C/87)

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER,
(The Right Hon. Winston Churchill).

Sunday, 22nd June 1941. 9.0 p.m. (Home Service Programme).

I have taken occasion to speak to you to-night because we have reached one of the climacterics of the War.

In the first of these intense turning points, a year ago, France fell prostrate under the German hammer and we had to face the assault alone.

The second was when the Royal Air Force beat the Hun raiders out of the daylight air and thus warded off the Nazi invasion of our island while we were still ill-armed and ill-prepared.

The third turning point was when the President and Congress of the United States passed the Lease and Lend enactment devoting nearly 2,000 million sterling of the wealth of the New World to help us defend our liberties and their own.

Those were the three climacterics. The fourth is now upon us. At four o'clock this morning, Hitler attacked and invaded Russia.

From the defeat of France in June 1940, Britain fought Hitler alone. But, on 22 June 1941, Germany invaded the Soviet Union. On that day Churchill made this speech regarding that momentous event. Later in the speech, Churchill publicly states his support for Russia.

"We have but one aim and one single irrevocable purpose: we are resolved to destroy Hitler and every vestige of the Nazi regime. From this, nothing will turn us - nothing. We will never parley, we will never negotiate with Hitler or any of his gang. We shall fight him by land, we shall fight him by sea, we shall fight him in the air, until, with God's help, we have rid the earth of his shadow and liberated his people from his yoke. Any man or State who fights against Nazism, will have our aid... It follows, therefore, that we shall give whatever help we can to Russia and the Russian people."

For a full transcript of this document see below: Appendix 2

Document 4: Photograph of Winston Churchill on board 'The Prince of Wales,' 11 August 1941 (BBK/P/1/21b)



In August 1941, Churchill and President Roosevelt met on board 'The Augusta' off the coast of Newfoundland, to discuss the war. Churchill also went to Washington. This photograph (above) shows Churchill on board 'The Prince of Wales' on the return journey. Also featured is Lord Beaverbrook (reading, to Churchill's right), then Minister of Supply.

Documents 2-4 are among the extensive personal and political papers of Lord Beaverbrook (BBK). These papers will be included on the on-line catalogue of the Parliamentary Archives, which will be available in spring 2005.

Appendix 1: Full transcript of notes of a speech by Winston Churchill broadcast on BBC radio, 10pm, 15 November 1934 (LG/G/4/5/7):

I have but a short time to deal with this enormous subject and I beg you therefore to weigh my words with the attention and thought which I have given to them. As we go to and fro in this peaceful country with its decent orderly people going about their business under free institutions and with so much tolerance and fairplay in their laws and customs, it is startling and fearful to realise that we are no longer safe in our island home. For nearly one thousand years England has never seen camp fires of an invader, the stormy seas and our Royal Navy have been our sure defence. Not only have we preserved our life and freedom through the centuries, but gradually we have come to be the heart and centre of an Empire which surrounds the globe. It is indeed with a pang of stabbing pain that we see all this in mortal danger. A thousand years has been spent to form a State; an hour may lay it in the dust. What shall we do? Many people think that the best way to escape war is to dwell upon its horrors and to imprint them vividly upon the minds of the younger generation. They flaunt the grizzly photographs before their eyes. They fill their ears with tales of carnage; they dilate upon the ineptitude of Generals and Admirals; they denounce the crime and insensate folly of human strife. Now all this teaching ought to be very useful in preventing us from attacking or invading any other country. It seems to me no one outside a mad house would wish to do so. But how would it help us if we were attacked or invaded ourselves? That is what we have to ask. Would the invaders visit Lord Beaverbrook's exhibition, or listen to the impassioned appeals of Mr. Lloyd George. Would they meet that famous South African General Smuts and have their inferiority complex removed in friendly debate? I doubt it. I have borne responsibility for the safety of this country in grievous times; I gravely doubt it. But even if they did, I am not so sure we should convince them and persuade them to go back quietly home. They might say: You are rich, we are poor; you seem well fed; we are hungry. You have been victorious; we have been defeated. You have valuable colonies; we have none. You have your Navy, where is ours. You had the past; let us have the future. Above all I fear they would say: You are weak, and we are strong. After all, my friends, only a few hours away by air there dwells a nation of nearly 70 millions of the most educated, industrious scientific people in the world, who are being taught from childhood to think of war as a glorious exercise and death in battle as the noblest deed for man. There is a nation which has abandoned all its liberties in order to augment its collective strength. There is a nation which with all its strength and virtue is in the grip of a group of ruthless men preaching a gospel of intolerance and racial pride unrestrained by law by Parliament or by public opinion. In that country all pacifist speeches, all morbid books, are forbidden or suppressed and the authors rigorously imprisoned. From their new table of commandments they have omitted: Thou shalt not kill. It is but 20 years since these neighbours of ours fought almost the whole world and almost defeated them. Now they are re-arming with the utmost speed. And ready to their hands is this new lamentable weapon of the air against which a Navy has no defence and before which women and children, the weak and the frail, the pacifist and the jingo, the warrior and the civilian, the front line trenches and the cottage home all lie in equal peril. Nay, worse still, for with the new weapon has come a new method, or has come back the most brutish method of ancient barbarism – the possibility of compelling the submission of races by torturing their civil population. And worst of all, the more civilised the country is, the larger, more splendid its cities, the more intricate the structure of its social and economic

life, the more it is vulnerable, the more it is at the mercy of those who may make it their prey. These are facts. Hard grim, indisputable facts, and in face of these facts, I ask again, What are we to do?

There are those who say: Let us ignore the Continent of Europe. Let us leave it with its hatreds and armaments to stew in its own juice, to fight out its own quarrels. Let us turn our backs upon this alarming scene. Let us fix our gaze across the ocean and lead our own life in the midst of our peace-loving dominions and empire. There is much to be said for this plan if only we could unfasten the British islands from their rock foundations and could tow them 3,000 miles across the Atlantic Ocean and anchor them safely upon the smiling coasts of Canada. I have not heard of any way in which this could be done. No engineer has come forward with any scheme; even our best scientists are dumb. It would certainly in any case take a long time. Have we got a long time? At present we lie within a few minutes' striking distance of the French, Dutch and Belgian coasts, and within a few hours of the great aerodromes of Central Europe. We are even within cannon shot of the Continent. Is it prudent? Is it possible, however we might desire it, to turn our backs upon Europe and ignore whatever may happen there. Everyone can judge this question for himself. And everyone ought to make up his mind, or her mind, about it, without delay. It lies at the heart of our problem.

For my part I have come to the conclusion reluctantly I admit that we cannot get away. Here we are. We must make the best of it, but do not, I beg you, underrate the risks, the grievous risks, we have to run. I hope, I pray, and on the whole, grasping the larger hope, I believe that no war will fall upon us. But if in the near future the great war of 1914 is resumed again in Europe after the armistice, for that is what it may come to under different conditions, in different combinations no doubt, if that should happen no one can tell where and how it would end. Or whether sooner or later we should not be dragged into it, as the U.S.A. were dragged in against their will in 1917. Whatever happened, and whatever we did, it would be a time of frightful danger for us. When the war was over, or perhaps while it still raged, we should be brought face to face with the victors, whoever they might be. Indeed, with our wealth and vast possessions, we should be the only prize sufficiently attractive for their exertions and to compensate them for their loss. Then certainly those who had disregarded Europe would have to turn round very quickly indeed, and then it would be too late. Therefore it seems to me that we cannot detach ourselves from Europe, and that for our own safety and self-preservation we are bound to make exertions and run risks for the sake of keeping peace. There are some who say, indeed it has been the shrill cry of the hour, we should run the risk of disarming ourselves in order to set an example to others. We have done that already. Done it for the last five years. Our example has not been followed. On the contrary, it has produced, as I ventured to predict, the opposite result. All the other countries have armed the more heavily and the quarrels and intrigues about disarmament have only bred more ill-will between the nations. Every one would be glad to see the burden of armaments reduced in every country, but history shows on many a page that armaments are not necessarily a cause of war. Want of them has been no guarantee of peace. If for instance all the explosives all over the world could by a wave of magic wand be robbed of their power and made harmless so that not a cannon [or] rifle could fire and not a shell or bomb detonate, that would be a measure of world disarmament far beyond the brightest dreams of Geneva, but would it ensure peace? That is the question. On the contrary, in my belief war would begin almost the next day, when enormous masses of fierce men armed with picks and spades or soon with clubs and spears, would pour over the frontiers and would be furiously resisted by the local populations and those who went to their aid. This truth may be unfashionable, unpalatable, no doubt unpopular, but it is the truth. The story of mankind shows that war was universal and unceasing for millions of years before armaments were invented or armies organised. Indeed, the intervals of peace and order only occur in human history after armaments in the hands of strong governments have come into being and civilisation in every age has been nursed only in cradles guarded by superior weapons and superior discipline. To remove the causes of war we must go deeper than armaments. Remove grievances and injustice, raise human thought to a higher plain; we must give a new inspiration to the world. Let moral disarmament come, and physical disarmament will soon follow. But what sign of this is there now? When we look out upon the state of Europe and of the world and of the position of our own country as they are tonight, it seems to me that the next year or the next two years may contain a fateful turning point in our history. I am afraid if you look intently at what is

moving towards Great Britain, you will see that the only choice open is the old grim choice our forbears had to face, namely, whether we shall submit or whether we shall prepare. Whether we shall submit to the will of a stronger nation or whether we shall prepare to defend our rights, liberties and indeed our lives. If we submit our submission should be timely. If we prepare our preparation should not be too late. Submission will entail at the very least the passing and destruction of the British Empire, and the acceptance by our people within and under a Teutonic domination of Europe of whatever future may be in store for small countries like Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Belgium and Switzerland. The difficulty about submission I state it calmly, the difficulty is that we have already in this land, the population of a first-class Power, and on our new scale of life as a model State we could not feed more than perhaps half of those who now live here. Great issues will arise in deciding which half should survive. You have perhaps read the story of the Raft of the Medusa; I will not dwell on that. These are the disadvantages of submission, and of Britain definitely relinquishing her great position in the world. Preparation, on the other hand, involves statesmanship, expense and exertion, and neither submission nor preparation are free from suffering and danger. I should not speak to you my friends, fellow-countrymen, in this way, if I were not prepared to declare to you some of the measures of preparation by which I believe another great war may be averted and our destruction be prevented should war come.

First, we must, without another day's delay, begin to make ourselves at least the strongest Air Power in the European world. By this means we shall recover to a very large extent the safety which we formerly enjoyed through our Navy, and through our being an island. By this means we shall free ourselves from the dangers of being blackmailed against our will either to surrender our possessions and ever hand over such machines of defence as we possess, or of being forced to join in a continental war against our wish, or against our feeling of right and justice, by these means we shall remove from Europe that additional danger to peace which arises when a very wealthy nation and Empire is so obviously undefended that it lies an inviting bait or prey to the ambitions of hungry Powers. That is not all we should do. I look to the League of Nations as being an instrument which properly sustained and guided may preserve the threatened peace of the world. I know it is fashionable in some quarters to attack the League of Nations, but where is there any other equal hope. The many countries, great and small, that are afraid of being absorbed or invaded by Germany, should lay their fears and their facts before the League of Nations. If the League of Nations is satisfied that these fears are justified should call upon its Members to volunteer as special constables for the preservation of peace against a particular danger. Naturally those would be most ready to volunteer whose homes lay nearest the regions where the outbreak was most likely to occur. It might well be that not only two or three nations, but 8 or 10 would be found willing in their own interests and in the interests of peace to undertake this special obligation. There would then come into being within the League of Nations and under its authority, a special service band of nations who are in danger and who want to be let alone. It would be a confederation not merely of the peace-loving Powers, for everyone will say they are that, but peace interested Powers, -- a League of those who have most to lose by war and nearest to the danger. I accept the words which General Smuts used only on Monday last. There should be, he said, a smaller group within the League entering into mutual defensive arrangements, and subject to the control of the League. Those are words of wisdom and it seems to me that Great Britain should not refuse to bear her share and do her part in this. These volunteer special constables should not only be authorised but urged by the League of Nations to concert with one another measures of mutual defence against the invasion of any one of them whether by land sea or air, and to undertake to maintain forces while the danger lasts, which, collectively are so overwhelming, that there is no chance of anyone being attacked.

You have heard the old doctrine of the balance of power. I don't accept it. Anything like a balance of power in Europe will lead to war. Great wars usually come only when both States think they have good hopes of victory. Peace must be founded upon preponderance; there is safety in numbers. If there were 5 or 6 on each side, there might be a frightful trial of strength, but if there were 8 or 10 on one side and only one or two upon the other, and if the collective armed forces on one side were 3 or 4 times as large as the other, then there will be no war. The practical arrangements which are appropriate to one peril and to one region

of the world may be repeated elsewhere in different combinations in other seas, and it might well be that gradually the whole world would be laced with international insurance against individual aggressors and confidence and safety would return to mankind. If the first stage of such a structure should be built up by the League of Nations at the present time, and there may still be time, it would I believe enable us to get through the next 10 years without a horrible and fatal catastrophe, and in that interval, in that blessed breathing space, we might be able to re-construct the life of Europe and re-unite in justice and goodwill our quaking civilisation. May God protect us all.

Appendix 2: Full transcript of a speech by Winston Churchill broadcast on 'The Home Service Programme' (BBC radio), 9pm, Sunday 22 June 1941 (BBK/C/87)

I have taken the occasion to speak to you tonight because we have reached one of the climacterics of the War.

In the first of these intense turning points, a year ago, France fell prostrate under the German hammer and we had to face the assault alone.

The second was when the Royal Air Force beat the Hun raiders out of the daylight air and thus warded off the Nazi invasion of our island while we were still ill-armed and ill-prepared.

The third turning point was when the President and Congress of the United States passed the lease and lend enactment devoting nearly 2,000 million sterling of the wealth of the New World to help us defend our liberties and their own.

Those were the three climacterics. The fourth is now upon us. At four o'clock this morning, Hitler attacked and invaded Russia. All his usual formalities of perfidy were observed with scrupulous technique. A non-aggression Treaty had been solemnly signed and was in force between the two countries. No complaint had been made by Germany of its non-fulfilment. Under its cloak of false confidence, the German Army drew up in immense strength along a line stretched from the White Sea to the Black Sea, and their Air Fleet and armoured division slowly and methodically took up their station. Then, finally, without declaration of war - without even an ultimatum, the German bombs rained down from the sky upon the Russian cities: German troops violated the Russian frontiers; and an hour later the German Ambassador who till the night before was lavishing his assurances of friendship, almost of alliance, upon the Russians, called upon the Russian Foreign Minister to tell him that a state of war existed between Germany and Russia.

Thus was repeated, on a far larger scale, the same kind of outrage against every form of signed compact and international faith which we have witnessed in Norway, in Denmark, in Holland, in Belgium and which Hitler and his jackal Mussolini so faithfully imitated in the case of Greece.

All this was no surprise to me. In fact I gave clear and precise warning to Stalin of what was coming. I gave him warning as I have given warning to others before. I can only hope that this warning did not fall unheeded. All we know at present is that the Russian people are defending their native soil and that their leaders have called upon them to resist to the utmost.

Hitler is a monster of wickedness, insatiable in his lust for blood. Not content with having all Europe under his heel, or else terrorised into various forms of abject submission, he must now carry his work of butchery and desolation among the vast multitudes of Russia and Asia. The terrible military machine which we and the rest of the civilised world so foolishly, so supinely, so insensately allowed that Nazi gangster to build up year by year from almost nothing - this machine cannot stand idle, lest it rust or fall to pieces. It must be in

continual motion, grinding up human lives and trampling down the homes and the rights of hundreds of millions of men. Moreover it must be fed, not only with flesh, but with oil.

So this blood-thirsty guttersnipe must launch his mechanised Army upon new fields of slaughter, pillage, and devastation; on the poor Russian peasants, workmen and soldiers. He must steal from them their daily bread; he must devour their harvests, he must rob them of the oil which drives their ploughs - and thus reduce them to famine without example in human history.

And even the carnage and ruin which his victory, should he gain it - he has not gained it yet - will bring upon the Russian people, will in itself be only a stepping stone in the attempt to plunge the four or five hundred millions who live in China, and the three hundred and fifty million who live in India, into that bottomless pit of human degradation over which the diabolic emblem of the Swastika flaunts itself. It is not too much to say here this summer evening, that the lives and happiness of a thousand million additional people are now menaced with brutal Nazi violence. It is enough to make us hold our breath. But presently I shall show you something else that lies behind, and something that touches very nearly the life of Britain and of the United States.

The Nazi regime is indistinguishable from the worst features of Communism. It is devoid of all theme and principle except appetite and racial domination. It excels all forms of human wickedness in the efficiency of its cruelty and ferocious aggression. No one has been a more consistent opponent of Communism than I have for the last 25 years. I will unsay no word that I have spoken about it; but all this fades away before the spectacle which is now unfolded. The past, with its crimes, its follies and its tragedies, flashes away. I see the Russian soldiers standing on the threshold of their native land, guarding the fields which their fathers have tilled from time immemorial. I see them guarding their homes where mothers and wives pray - Ah yes, for there are times when all pray - for the safety of their loved ones, the return of the bread-winner, of the champion, of their protector. I see the 10,000 villages of Russia, where the means of existence was wrung so hardly from the soil, but where there are still primordial human joys - where maidens laugh and children play. I see advancing upon all this, in hideous onslaught, the Nazi War machine, with its clanking, heel-clicking, dandified Prussian officers, and its crafty expert agents, fresh from the cowering and the tying down of a dozen countries. I see also the dull, drilled, docile, brutish masses of the Hun soldiers plodding on like a swarm of crawling locusts. The German bombers and fighters in the sky, still smarting from many a British whipping, so delighted to find what they believe is an easier and safer prey.

Behind all this glare, behind all this...(?), I see that small group of villainous men who plan, organise and launch this cataract of horrors upon mankind. My mind goes back across the years to the days when the Russian Armies were our Allies against the same deadly foe; when they fought with so much valour and constancy, and helped to gain a victory from all share in which, alas, they were through no fault of ours - utterly cut off. I have lived through all this and you will pardon me if I express my feelings at the stir of old memories.

But now I have to declare the decision of His Majesty's Government - and I feel sure it is a decision in which the great Dominions will, in due course, concur - but we must speak out now, at once, without a day's delay. I have to make the declaration, but can you doubt what our policy will be? We have but one aim and one single irrevocable purpose: we are resolved to destroy Hitler and every vestige of the Nazi regime. From this, nothing will turn us - nothing. We will never parley, we will never negotiate with Hitler or any of his gang. We shall fight him by land, we shall fight him by sea, we shall fight him in the air, until, with God's help, we have rid the earth of his shadow and liberated his people from his yoke. Any man or State who fights against Nazism, will have our aid. Any man or State who marches with Hitler is our foe. This applies not only to organised States but to all representatives of that vile race of "Quislings" who make themselves the tools and agents of the Nazi regime against their fellow-countrymen and against the lands of their birth. These Quislings, like the Nazi leaders themselves, if not disposed of by their fellow-countrymen

- which would save trouble - will be delivered by us on the morrow of victory to the justice of the Allied Tribunal. That is our policy and that is our declaration. It follows, therefore, that we shall give whatever help we can to Russia and the Russian people. We shall appeal to all our friends and Allies in every part of the world to take the same course and to pursue it as we shall, faithfully and steadfastly to the end.

We have offered the Government of Soviet Russia any technical or economic assistance which is in our power, and which is likely to be of service to them. We shall bomb Germany by day as well as by night in ever-increasing measure, casting upon them month by month a heavier discharge of bombs, and making the German people taste and gulp each month a sharper dose of the miseries they have showered upon mankind. It is noteworthy that only yesterday the Royal Air Force, fighting inland over France, cut down with very small loss to themselves, 28 of the Hun fighting machines in the air above the French soil which they have invaded, defiled and profess to hold. But this is only a beginning. From now henceforward the main expansion of our Air Force proceeds with gathering speed. In another six months the weight of the help we are receiving from the United States in War materials of all kinds and especially in heavy bombers - will begin to tell

This is no "class war". It is a War in which the whole British Empire and Commonwealth of Nations is engaged without distinction of race, creed or party. It is not for me to speak of the action of the United States, but this I will say: if Hitler imagines that his attack on Soviet Russia will cause the slightest division of aims or slackening of effort in the great Democracies, who are resolved upon his doom, he is woefully mistaken. On the contrary, we shall be fortified and encouraged in our efforts to rescue mankind from his tyranny; we shall be strengthened, and not weakened, in our determination and in our resources.

This is not time to moralise on the follies of countries and Governments which have allowed themselves to be cut down one by one when by united action they could so easily have saved themselves and saved the world from this catastrophe. But when I spoke a few minutes ago of Hitler's blood-lust and the hateful appetites which have impelled or lured him on his Russian adventure, I said there was one deeper motive behind his outrages. He wishes to destroy the Russian power because he hopes that if he succeeds in this, he will be able to bring back the main strength of his Army and Air Force from the East and hurl it upon this island, which he knows he must conquer or suffer the penalties. His invasion of Russia is no more than a prelude to an attempted invasion of the British Isles. He hopes no doubt that all this may be accomplished before the winter comes, and that he can overwhelm Great Britain before the Fleet and Air power of the United States will intervene. He hopes that he may once again repeat, upon a greater scale than ever before, that process of destroying his enemies one by one by which he has so long thrived and prospered; and that then the scene will clear for the final act, without which all his conquests would be in vain - namely, the subjugation of the Western Hemisphere to his will and to his system.

The Russian danger is therefore our danger and the danger of the United States, just as the cause of any Russian fighting for his hearth and home is the cause of free men and free people in every quarter of the globe. Let us observe the lessons already taught by such cruel experience. Let us re-double our exertions and strike with united strength while life and power remain.